

## Manhunts with Benefits

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## Manhunts with Benefits

by [orphan\\_account](#)

### Summary

A series of manhunts, won and lost by things outside of the game's barriers. Although these are technically like oneshot manhunt episodes, it's probably best to read them all in succession because there is a Very subtle build-up of references and trade-offs.

Oh just a warning! It's a little violent, evident with how manhunts are. It's like Minecraft with enhanced senses.

### Notes

hey these are from wattpad with the same name! i hope you all like these oneshots i put a lot of minecraft research into these!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# Chapter 1

George hisses at the heat biting at his skin, and especially at the Blaze that narrowly missed him earlier. Netherrack tumbles below its feet, crashing into lava pools with an agonized splash—that is, *if* you can call them splashes at all— as he attempts to scale his way back to his portal. The whole Nether boils seethingly at his presence, groaning in a godforsaken rot.

But there is one entity that doesn't, albeit it is not any more pleasant to hear, if not downright unsettling already.

"Geoorrgge~!" A maniacal voice calls from afar, "I can smell you!"

And despite being literally in hell, he feels his heart freeze, a breath held by strings of air that worm like maggots from the biome's overbearing fever. He looks behind him, but solely to see nothing. No faint green outline, and no sound of slithering footsteps. Dream is not found.

Yet.

He bounds across a closed area, gaining speed from the two-block-high opening—and there sits the bold obsidian on the far side of the cliff, crying to him in droves of traumatized whispers. With the last push of aching muscle and drenching in sweat, he books it up the hill, tired of netherrack as much as it is tired of him.

Only now to see the cold white of iron striking out of, quite frankly, nowhere it seems, and George feels the shock of it choke right to his neck. Dream rounds him backwards, the menacing sound of metal ringing louder than the Nether can hear.

As well as an annoyingly confident laugh.

"You're dead, George," an unhinged edge to his smile, if smiling were even possible for him, "Come here!!"

So, down goes George, scrambling away and fruitlessly grabbing at the rocks behind him.

"No—please—oh, you've got to be joking," he manages to mutter.

He knows he cannot win this fight, and there he is, cornered at the edge of a lava lake with a shield that is about to lose its bearings. For lack of a better escape, there is only one option left: an ender pearl. Choosing to fall, he chucks his one gateway out and breaks a sweat at his landing.

"What?! No— get back here!" Dream's feet skip a beat.

Yet through the portal George goes, and the cool air engulfs him— a satisfactory relief to his lungs and his scorching nerves.

But satisfactory is not safety, and safety will never be known as long as he lives.

He digs to the side of the wall, blocking it off with andesite and granite or whatever isn't cobble because the risk of Dream finding his location will surely end him if he doesn't think fast. Very closely, he can hear the hushes of the portal weep with joy when Dream wolfs his way through. So, with another lone option he has left, he towers up.

"Oh, George~!!!" A taunt sounds through the solid stone, "Where are you? Come out to play~!"

"Leave me alone, Dream!" George struggles back, only to hear a laugh in reply.

Seeing as words are nothing but an excessive waste of energy, he doesn't say anything else. Their banter is always like that—one of them unsatisfied, and frustratingly so, it's usually him.

Of course, neither of them can help it, because what is their mortal game if both of them wins?

After about an impatient amount of mining up, he finally reaches the rich brown of dirt and scrambles above the surface, his vision flashing tired from the overwhelming brightness of the midday sky and what is apparently the green of a plains biome. His head whips around, and he frantically throws his cobble or whatever block he has to seal the hole he's made on the ground.

Beyond him lies the ominous shadows of a dark oak forest—a good place to hide, at least for now, and with the desperation in his eyes, he books it. Digging under a two-by-two block tree, he confines himself in a hole and closes it off, deeming it safe to cook some food.

Hopefully, Dream does not look for him there, but in truth, he never knows what Dream is about to do. He is relentless—and to his credit, he has to be. His ambition to win has never been a joking matter, and that goes for either of them.

George tries his damndest to sneak as long as he can, setting up his furnaces in his pathetic refuge, and with his armor whittled down to its last hits, he takes the time to craft himself new ones. But most importantly, he needs to find himself an ender pearl, or preferably, at least twelve of them.

And he would, if he didn't see Dream's nametag whip across the corner of his eyes.

"...George?"

"...Yeah?"

"...What are you.. Doing?"

"Uhh... Nothing."

"Liar."

"You'll have to find out."

Regretting his last words, George thinks Dream has the audacity to dig straight down, but it turns out this is not the case. Through the dirt and wood, Dream's name sits directly above him, supposedly on top of the tree, and away it goes, bounding across the sea of leaves.

"Where'd you go...." mutters Dream—a tang of animalistic desire, "Cotton-Eyed Joe?"

And with this, George takes his materials and slinks out from under the tree, praying to God he's running the opposite direction.

Then he remembers praying will only get him false hope.

Speeding through the forest, he finally makes his way back to the plains, and in the distance appears a tall, dark, and handsome man—just who he needs.

The Enderman is surprisingly compliant in his death, disintegrating into but one single pearl. George holds it up and examines its squishy texture, which is soon to be brittled by hot blaze powder—and there you have it: an Eye of Ender. With a gentle hand, he raises it up to the sky.

And it floats right behind him.

*You cannot be serious...*

So, there he finds the faint green outline and the slither of steps he missed earlier, if he can even see green, which he can't. Regardless, his opponent wolfs his way toward him, and despite being only one entity, he feels like Dream has morphed into a pack of them. Not gracing him time with a thought, George nearly breaks the grass as he pivots.

"Come here, Georgie! Let me kill you just this once," an tease of venom to Dream's laugh.

There they are again, skittering in their mortal game, though it'll take a long time for either one of them to get tired of it. Dream, either way, turns into a ruthless beast no matter whose role he assumes—cat or mouse. George, ironically, does like to play along despite the simmering anxiety it gives him.

In the distance, the grass rips itself apart in place of a deep ravine, calling to him in just one risky jump away from an eternal chase.

*Perfect timing, old friend.*

At a bone-crunching landing across, he whips around as Dream tries to do the same, though not before George takes a swing of his sword and watches him plummet down.

"No—nonono—" Dream's prayers hiss as he struggles for his inventory.

But alas, the concrete message in chat is enough to give George relief.

A distraught "NO!!" sounds, followed by an eaten mic and a fat slam of what is probably Dream's keyboard.

"YEAH!!!! Aha~!! You're so bad!!"

"Ughh," Dream laments, "You're so annoying."

"I'm just too good."

George stares down the hollow of the ground, collapsing in a heavy huff as he bites down on a piece of bread.

Or he would have, if he didn't feel the blunt pain at his back and a drastic increase in vertigo. His eyes widen, and behind him, Dream stands over at the edge with nothing but himself. As both his body and his heart drop, Dream's figure turns into a blur, though either way, he hears his cocky laugh all the same.

"What!? No—!"

Though thankfully, he is the one that manages to successfully use his water bucket instead of Dream. Finally stable at the chasmic bottom, he cranes his neck up to see Dream scoffing in frustration.

"Oh, come *on*."

"Wh—How did you get there?!"

"Enderpearl," he grunts, "Teleported there after I died."

George does admit—albeit only ever to himself— that despite the easier option to pearl down, it would've been a smart move if it worked. He is also surprised Dream even told him, as usually he would laugh it off. Nevertheless, it brings him to the conclusion that Dream cannot win this fight, or at least, not now as George looks down at the remaining items left behind by his fall. He glares at the spare iron sword, happy at its symbolism, and stows it away. Sweeping up the rest of it, a couple pearls snatch his eye—a very nicely timed kill indeed—as well as the eye he threw earlier. Interesting. He looks up again at the now dimming sky, and figures that Dream is probably off getting supplies for himself, even though he can likely survive the night with nothing. Of course, George isn't sure, and he probably will never be, because Dream isn't certain in most of his risky decisions either.

Instead, it's George's challenge to figure that out before he does.

Not sparing another thought, because quite frankly, figuring out Dream is a long term goal, he tears into the wall so as not to be seen and makes his way straight upward. At the breach of the ground once again, the sky has already turned dark—a good sign for his point in the game. Hopping on top of the dark forest trees, he scampers towards the direction the eye flew, and turns his head every few seconds like a prey animal to make sure he is as alone as he prefers. A long trek and an equally long silence ensue.

It is always like this when travelling, albeit some instinctive mutters here and there. Whether they are lies or not, however, always remain a mystery to both of them. They know each other too much and too little to tell—underestimating and overestimating might as well be the same thing.

The leaves turn into a blur at this point, if they have not already before. Dark forests are always like this, but he manages to find yet another gaping ravine ripping across the ground—this one even bigger than the first.

And upon a closer look, stone brick pokes through the pools of water and lava and whatnot. How lucky.

George drops down to traverse the terrain trying to sniff out the End portal room. He is infinitely glad that he doesn't have the poor sense of direction that Dream does. That man runs in circles, whether it is around these structures or, even worse— his heart.

The worst, though, is the wrenching creep of silence when George makes the advancement, and a quiet Dream is someone—*something*?—to be feared. Regardless, light peeks through a room, as well as a hint of warmth.

*Oh, that must be it.*

And right he is, because the grand square appears before him, frame blocks calling to him in an ominous hush that makes him feel just as hollow as them. With his iron pickaxe, he tears apart the silverfish spawner. One less problem to worry about, but as pesky as they are, even they are probably glad to not be in Dream's presence right now. He hops in the middle of the square of lava, placing a block in the middle so as to not burn, obviously, and counts the eyes already filled in.

*Three. That's pretty good.*

The remaining nine are only satisfied by the four he currently has, and even if it is decent progress, that still leaves five left to gather. Sighing, he digs into the wall of the portal room.

And just his luck—Dream's *Eye Spy* advancement finds its way to the chat.

*Fuck.*

"GEORGE!!!" Dream is the one that screams this time.

With an iron pickaxe George now deems shit, he mines further and replaces the wall behind him.

"Where are you, you *nasty* little freak?"

This, in turn, sends an unsettling laugh up George's throat, "Haha, what? I dunno, where are *you*?"

"Oh, you know... around."

"'Around'?"

Squinting, George sees Dream's nametag run below him like a spider, and like a regular person, he digs the *fuck* away from it.

"C'mere, George..." Dream's voice only hushed by his giddiness, "You know I just wanna take care of you."

"Dream... just leave me alone," George pleads, half joking and half not, only for it to be met with a wheeze.

"Why would I do that?"

"No reason... Just to let me win."

Dream laughs again, "You're such an idiot."

And with that, their conversation ends as George is too focused on what is now the surface, fleeing away to a distant desert—a gamble, he supposes, but good for finding Endermen. Trekking through the desolate sand, he perches on top of a small hill to scour for them.

"Ugh, you're not here, are you?" An annoyed breath from Dream.

"Where?"

"You know *damn* well."

George stays silent at this, hoping he wouldn't give anything away, but it turns out that this silence is a hint in itself.

"You're up, aren't you?"

Continuing his silence, George leaps down his hill with a rather hurried feeling to his heart. He spots a delightful pack of two Endermen in the distance, and disposes of them quickly. Unfortunately for him, he only gets one pearl, and seeing as Dream is probably making his way to the surface, he scuffles off to find a spot to dig straight down.

Making a hole for himself, he descends slowly into the ground, and soon, a lonely cave greets him with shadows, as well as probably a broken ankle. He begins making a chamber of cobble where he dropped from, placing a square of lava in the middle. Hopefully, it'll deal quite the shock—a strange love message from him to Dream.

"Ugh, I can't find you. You're just being a little... hamster."

Replying with a chuckle, George continues his way skittering through the tunnels of stone. He does find an Enderman, although it is only one. Nevertheless, George supposes his mortality is better than loneliness, so in return, he is gifted back with a pearl. That's two out of five—three more.

"WHAT?!" A pleasant shout to George's ears, "What *was* that?! You made a trap!?"

"I'm surprised you fell for it."

"Didn't think you were that smart."

It is George's turn to laugh, but only this is to cover up the sign that he knows Dream is somewhere close. He makes his way between the dense maze of rock, a little uneasy, but focused. His tired eyes scan the cave walls for a hint of movement, but alas, there is nothing. Dream is not found.

Yet.

Had he not paid attention to the ground, however, he wouldn't have noticed a cliff right at his feet. Nearly falling out of an opening, he comes across a giant gap—yet *another* ravine. In particular, actually, it is the same ravine with the same stronghold.

How lucky.

He drops down and navigates through the stone bricks in search of any chests. Managing to find two more pearls, he pauses to count.

*Just one more.*

The grey bricks prove to be a lull to his eyes, who are searching for the contrast of just one more tall, dark, and handsome man.

But no mobs at all show their presence, and upon further hindsight, it is likely because of Dream, since every nook and cranny of the stronghold is filled with torches, which is unusual because Dream doesn't need torches—he always sets his brightness beyond the scale. How annoying, but it affirms his opponent's knowledge just as he expects.

Walking on the dull drone of ground, he surprisingly finds a single pearl stare at him from his feet — its teal texture squelches on the stone, warmed by only his own gaze.

*Did I forget to pick one up?*

Sparing it another thought, he holds it up to examine.

Or at least, he was going to if his side wasn't met with a sharp caress of diamond.

"HI GEORGE~!!!" Dream's echoes call from behind him.

*It was a trap!?*

Taking the now Eye of Ender, George makes a mad dash for it. He zips through doors, blocking them up as much as he can. Everything is hot and cold and an overwhelming blur—the ghostly silence of the stronghold now barking at him to run for his life. Behind him, Dream is already tailing with the incentive to bite. George staggers, covering the gaping, bloody smile on his abdomen—a strange love message from Dream to him.

Finally at the portal, he forces in the last eyes for it to howl its ear-splitting thunder, concrete to its core. Without another thought, he dives into the void and collapses onto the obsidian floor, nearly

knocking him out. The platform sits half on the cold, pale endstone, and half hanging out in the abyss, like a dog rolling out its tongue. He'll usually peer down the emptiness like an old friend, but now is not the time. He hurries to the inside of the mouth, mining fruitlessly, because not long after, Dream's End achievement follows his own.

George cowers backwards, a hiss to his movements and a humbleness to his bones, as Dream stands over him with the hungry glare of not only his eyes—and not a diamond sword— but a diamond axe held pridefully above his head.

"It's over George."

And he might be right about that, if not for but one simple request. He *was* hoping to save it for later, but what is a more crucial time than this?

"Oh, c'mon, Dream," George laughs sadly, for lack of mental stability, "Just leave me alone... please?"

Dream can only laugh, "Why would I do that?"

"I'll—I'll give you something."

Dream scoffs, "You're such an idiot. What could I possibly want better than making you die?"

Gaining momentum for the final swing, Dream begins to tilt the axe backwards—

"Let me go, and I'll tell you I love you."

With that, Dream freezes, nearly falling back from the weight of his weapon.

"...You... what?" He stutters, sounding less hungry and more confused.

"I said—"

"I heard what you said," Dream weakens his hold on the axe, eventually letting it bury its tip into the obsidian floor with such a suffocating shriek that George cannot help but flinch, "Well?"

Despite that it was his own plan to use them, George still chokes at his own words, but if he loses them, he'll surely do the same to his entire game.

"I... I love you, Dream. I love you," a light, airy feeling follows his breath, even though that same breath might be his last.

But Dream softens his posture. He lets go of the hatchet's handle, and leaves it to stand on its own. He takes a step back.

"...Dream?"

Another step. And yet another, until his feet reach the edge of the obsidian. Then, he shifts around, not a hesitation to his pivot. He smiles playfully, shaking his head. Dream does not usually hold promises, but this one is something he cannot let go.

"I'll see you at spawn, you nasty little freak."

He kicks off, rather dramatically, actually, and down he falls like a ragdoll to the End's edge.

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And so, when the rain of experience points flood around George's feet, he watches as the credits sink below his eyes.

But for the first time, he feels hollow from victory.

George returns to the world, looking at the spruce trees to his sides—a stillness in motion, and motion in stillness. That is, until a couple of fists round to his back, scaring the one life he managed to keep.

Behind him, Dream lets out a wheeze, and in turn, George lets out a huff.

"You scared me, idiot!"

"I think I have the right to," Dream prides himself indignantly, "At least, after what you pulled."

George defends himself once again, shrugging this time, "I mean, it worked!"

"Ugh, I can't believe I did that."

"I can't believe it either."

Dream looks away in embarrassment—a flaw to his character. Too caring and not caring at all, "That is so unfair. You can't do that!"

"It was totally fair! You could've killed me, but you didn't."

"Wh—Well that's because..." Dream loses his words.

"Because...?"

"....I really wanted to hear you say it."

George's heart melts softly at this, although he'll never admit it.

"You're a simp," he says.

"Shut up, you're so annoying."

## Chapter 2

Dream struggles at his flint and steel, but finally manages to light fire upon the silent obsidian. The portal's violet howls, however, are the opposite of silent, hissing at him in hungry cheers. He takes a look around. Usually, he'd be so far ahead of George by now that he'd make a trap, but this time his quietness proves him unsure. Not a single sound has been made by him once Dream started his search for a lava pool, and he's a frequent victim to George's lies, or rather this time, lack of one. Regardless, he abandons the grass and takes a step in.

Immediately, the sweltering heat crashes into his skin, and he's left to cough and choke at a dry mouth that may never get water again, unlike the desert he visited earlier. He spawns in a rather preferable Nether— it's high up where he can see over a vast lava lake, along with little islands of netherrack trailing in an easy path.

But still, despite the advancement, George is void of all messages.

".... George?"

A sultry, "Yeah?" sounds in reply.

"What are you doing? You're so quiet."

"Nothing, Dream."

"That's not true."

"Oh, c'mon Dream, just worry about yourself, and I'll only worry about me."

"Shut up, it is literally your goal to kill me."

"Yeah? And?"

"Oh my God, you're so annoying."

A rather cute laugh is his only response. And like always, their conversations end in one being unsatisfied, and frustratingly so, this time it is him.

He continues through a warped forest, its strange vines and trees staring at him, though whether it is out of hostility or benevolence is something he cannot tell. The "grass," or whatever it is, curls away from his feet, and whether *that* is out of courtesy or fear is *also* a mystery to him. Starting to sprint, he peers around between the variations of rock and across the vast molten bodies. No fortress. But as unfortunate as it is, he does not voice his distaste in the situation in case George is still listening.

Soon, the ground throws away its blue texture to the air, replacing its purple haze, in exchange for the agonized brown sand and soil. Patches of turquoise fire dazzle the floor, and in the increasingly dangerous distance appear idle crackles of bones and the soft whimpers of lost ghosts.

And of course, George's Nether advancement catches his eye.

*Ugh, fine.*

"I'm gonna get you, Dream." It is George's turn to taunt with a glint of hunger.

Making an irritated noise, Dream pulls out his stack of cobble and hops along the Soulsand Valley. Arrows and fireballs only narrowly fly past him, searing his body with the close hiss of fire and metal. It is his first time speedrunning through this biome, and it proves to be a challenge, because like a fool, he never carries a bow. But what he does have is a shield, and it deems itself worthy a tool enough.

The long stretch of soul continues, and the more time he spends in it, the more bleak it becomes—its frequent pits of bones humble his own to their marrow.

A mutter from George interrupts his blank thinking, "Ugh, this Nether is like... open. You're such an idiot."

Dream, suddenly agitated, then retorts, "You're acting like it's *my* choice to spawn in a lucky place that would help *me*?"

"I mean. It kind of is."

George always manages to find the stupidest arguments to distract him, and they almost work, to his surprise. It is smart, likely because George is the most irritating person ever, but he'll never say that out loud.

Dream makes an exasperated noise, but again chooses not to talk any further, because if he had, he wouldn't have noticed the contrast of bold nether brick against the greys and browns and blues. So, like an idiot, he gasps.

"What?" George says.

Dream catches his own mistake, "Nothing."

His only reply is an unconvinced hum, which is to be expected, because Dream cannot hold in his excitement when finding something good, and it breaks through his lies.

Weaving through arrows, and being shot by some, he makes his way to this supposed fortress, and upon further inspection, it's absolutely massive. Unending dark pillars sink ominously into the sea of bright below, its emptiness only held by the whims of the dead.

Towering up, Dream throws himself over the blocks of bricks, and while peering over fences and whatnot, he feels the hot rock hissing at his boots, scolding him that he's too cold for their taste. Nevertheless, he continues to investigate further along the stretch of waste. And strangely again, George lacks the courage to react at his advancement.

Left and right and left and right— he pokes his green head around at a constant, not knowing if he's been anywhere at all, and somehow it all looks new to him. Fuck his terrible sense of direction, honestly. He doesn't even realize he's running in circles until the same torch tells him to go back. Grunting, he scatters to find another stretch of brick that he hasn't already been in. The branches of the fortress toss him back and forth, leaving him to scan eagerly for anything, really. Soon, he's met with walls of netherrack closing in, and whether they will assert themselves useful is for the future to decide.

But of course, George's [*A Terrible Fortress*] advancement pops in chat, and Dream makes a rather unscriptable whine. George's reply is yet another giggle.

At the same time, and thank fuck, he perks up at the hollow calls of anguished, hot men at the other side of the netherrack— just what he needs.

He turns around a corner to see that he is just right—a Blaze spawner, and, unlike George who usually puts his opponents to a gentle sleep, Dream brutally murders them, gathering around three rods by the time he finally hears another noise from the person thereof.

"Ohh, Dream~!" He teases.

Dream's shoulders lift from a sharp flash of tension, which for some reason turns to relief, and which soon turns to a low crouch. Blocking off the entrance, he quickly scans through the walls of his makeshift shelter.

However, like the fortress initially seemed: nothing. George is not found.

Probably unwisely deeming his temporary safety sufficient, Dream turns back to the stairs, where awaits two more fresh Blazes. But fighting back as they might, they bite their own smoke to the white iron of Dream's sword. Dream himself pats his skin, who in turn screams in the unbearable heat. He hisses back at it.

Ignoring it to pay attention to his inventory, he counts five Blaze rods, now—only two more to go. Another waiting game ensues, and like usual, he tries to be hyper aware to any crawling eyes that might ghost his back.

That is, until George gets a [*Diamonds!*] advancement, and Dream's heart stutters in stupidity. Rookie mistake, not checking all the chests, and he blames it on his poor navigation, if not himself first. An annoying disadvantage, though he supposes it is a balance to his insane risk factor.

"I hope you're still like this if you get to the stronghold," George cheers, probably caressing a diamond tool in his hands.

"Don't you mean 'when'?" Dream says.

"No," George laughs, "You're actually dead."

Ignoring the slither of ambition and nagging in his voice, Dream makes quick work of the last three Blazes that spawned—a very nice collection of eight, and a very nice proof of his luck turning around, especially since his visit to an earlier temple refused to cut him some slack. Taking out his pickaxe, he tries to mine away as quietly as he can, if that were possible. He would usually go out and kill George himself, but even if he only found one diamond in that chest, he chooses not to risk it this time. His cockiness has determined itself a losing component, and he does not plan on that being the case again.

Slinking around the corner, he exhales a slow, concentrated breath. Again, nothing. For some lingeringly obvious reason, he does not feel safe, which is strange, because he is usually not very intimidated by George—like, at all—but somehow, the walls of the fortress sound like they are warning him as if they were George feeling pity himself. He hates it.

He continues to greet the disappearance of the netherrack ceiling—back to where he started. This is good, he supposes as he makes his sprint towards his cobble tower, or wherever he can remember it to be, at least.

Until a gleam of diamond kisses his back—a strange love message from George to him.

"Dream!" A giddy laugh, "Dream~~!!!!"

Behind him George smiles with a bite to his teeth and so does his sword, and Dream frantically scrambles away, because *hell* does that hurt. So, like usual, they return to their game of cat and

mouse, but more literal this time.

The bricks at his feet simmer at him to run for his life, but he turns around anyway in an attempt to knock George off the fortress. George is not much of a pack of wolves—he is more of a snake—though either way, both of them play dirty. Strangely, his smile has only gotten bigger since the chase started, but regardless, Dream tries to make the difference between both of their lives with a lone punch away.

Yet, upon a further flash of time, the difference in George before and after the punch is a block of netherrack in his hand, a concentrated hiss. There is no message in chat to confirm any type of death, and Dream, not risking to check what an isolated George is going to do, continues off choking on his own breath. Finding his tower of cobble, he mines down with a pickaxe he now deems shit.

"I knew you would do that," laughs George.

A crush to his ankle brings him to a dangerous close to his life—three hearts, in fact—when he reaches the netherrack, so taking time to eat, he whips his head around to see George's hungry silhouette standing in combination with the top of the fortress. Judging that having to scale down will buy Dream some time, he takes out another piece of steak and bites at his meat in satisfaction. However, George makes the strange decision to leap straight down, and Dream chuckles in confusion because he thinks he'll be free.

But like last time, no death message gives him relief, and he does a double take.

There, George looks up from his block of cobweb, hands full of shears and a yet-to-be satiated bloodlust.

George laughs with his usual, unsettling caterwaul, "AHAHA~! D R E A M ~!"

For lack of mental stability, Dream responds with another laugh, "Leave me alone, George!"

Judging again that, in fact, he *won't* have enough time, Dream tries his damndest to race through the dreaded valley back, and likewise, he grabs his cobble to sprint through.

In hindsight, he does admit the MLG cobweb was a very smart move—a good replacement for water, he notes—and unlike George, he is willing to do that out loud, but now is not the time. They continue their mortal game of cat and mouse, and in this instance, George somehow seems to retain his position as the hunter. It also appears that he has gotten better at his game mechanics, but more worryingly, he's analyzed Dream faster than he's figured it out himself, and that is all the more reason to run.

It took George long enough, honestly, but at the same time, it was probably not very easy, and he doesn't think it will ever be—it is George's challenge to try and keep up.

He makes a trail for the warped forest, its blue undergrowth shying away at his distress, and it gives him the final answer that they *do*, in fact, greet him with courtesy, but only at the cost of his life. Behind him, George is still running, ruthless in the way that he throws away his self preservation to the God that he doesn't believe in, because he's figured out that not taking chances will never work in his favor.

"Come here, Dream!!! Just let me kill you!!!" George bellows, his voice passed along by the forest whose hues he can actually see.

"No—get the *hell* away from me!"

"You know I'll never leave you alone, in or out of Minecraft."

As much as a sweet sentiment it stands, the current context inverts it into something terrifying, and Dream doesn't know whether he wants it to be true or not.

George's words have always been questionable like that, but Dream does not plan on finding out how committed he is to manifest them. He's full of both many stupid mysteries and many stupid clarities, and that is what throws Dream off most of the time. This is just George's challenge to him in return—to see what lies he beholds, and to try and keep up.

Though to be fair, and not to be cocky, Dream has always kept up.

With an increasing shortness of breath, the vines release their choke-hold on him and he finds himself once again on the familiar texture of netherrack floor. Even though it hisses at him because his feet are too cold to taste, he is relieved in their presence. The bold signal of obsidian is not too far away, so a block of TNT appears in one hand, and likewise, its counterpart flint and steel in the other.

Placing the dynamite down, he manages to light it, albeit not without a struggle as George rounds the corner. It flashes, but before it explodes, he grips his shield so hard it might keep him sane. Alas, Dream finally abandons the fever, taken by the portal's violent howls who cheer hungrily at his escape, and soon the satisfying wave of cool, temperate air crashes like a wave to his skin.

"Wait, what!?! No—!" George says, netherrack billowing in his face.

And there, the portal is left hollow, void and hostile at George's presence. He stares at it in disbelief, impressed, but frustrated, though unlike Dream, he'll never admit it out loud. On the other side, Dream breathes ruggedly from the shock. Either way, George hears his cocky laugh all the same.

Dream bounds away, getting as much distance from the portal as he can, because the possibility of George also having a flint and steel is yet to be confirmed. And thankfully, it is soon, because George complains.

"What!?! That is so unfair, I can't even get out of here, now."

"Yeah, you can," Dream teases, "Just find some gravel."

"Well, no use now. You've already gone. You always manage to do this. Ugh, you're so annoying."

Dream wheezes, triumphant and rightfully so.

But then George says, "You know what, fine. I'll stay right here."

*Wh—?*

And Dream swallows his own laugh, "What!?"

"I'm done chasing you, Dream."

Dream, in turn, scoffs, "You're lying."

"No, I'm making my own little survival world here. You can go defeat the Ender Dragon or whatever," a tinge of a pout and brattiness laces George's words, as far as Dream can tell.

And he stops. Well, that's no fun, but whatever.

No, actually— it's *not* whatever. It'll just be useless. As much as he doesn't want to admit it, he really likes when George chases him, mostly because he wins that way, but now winning won't matter when George isn't trying.

"Oh, c'mon, George, just chase me."

"No."

"Pleaaaaase...?"

"Dream, no."

"Whaaat?"

"I'm building a new life without you, Dream."

A petty silence.

"I can't believe you. George, just come back and chase me."

"No, you always win like that."

Dream begins walking, begrudgingly trying to urge himself to complete the challenge despite its pointlessness. The sky is dimming. He finds himself on sand that ground him in place. He reminds himself that he really hates sand.

"Is there any way to get you to come back?" Dream just sounds needy now, much to his chagrin.

There is a thoughtful pause, and Dream hears a sigh.

"Ok, fine," George says, "Bring me.... An allium."

An allium? Those only ever appear in flower biomes. And flower biomes are rare. George can't even see the color alliums are.

But Dream guesses he'll do it, because he's a simp.

"And name it 'I love you'."

He certainly didn't expect this, but he supposes it'll keep him busy. Turning back around, Dream ditches the desert for a forest. He feels upset, and he doesn't know why, but it might be the way the trees look down on him.

Or so he tells himself.

The grass in the Overworld curls around his feet. He feels appreciated by them, though not enough as he wants to be.

*Ugh, so annoying.*

As much of a twist it is, he is not surprised, because, in hindsight, it was probably bound to happen, but he hopes it'll humor both of them some.

Tired of trekking through the oak and birch, he hops along the trees for a better scan of the environment. Nothing.

"Dreaaaam," George drawls out, "Hurry up."

"Hurry up"?! *You* told me to find you an allium. That's like one of the rarest flowers, you idiot," Dream retorts, "And I have to find more iron to name it."

"Ugh, fine. Bring me.... A cornflower."

Cornflowers aren't hard to find. It's a color George can actually see, he presumes. Perched on top of the leaves, a plains biome peeks at the edge of his render distance. Soon, he deserts the forest and spots a nice patch of blue right at the edge. Perfect—moreover, how lucky.

He picks up a few. All of them look exactly the same, but it is to be expected. They'll look nice in the Nether, if it's possible to plant them, and at least after he kills George for making him go through this whole ordeal. Once or twice should be enough to satisfy him.

Nonchalantly, he scans for any caves, and manages to spot a hole in the ground on his sprint back. For some reason, he feels excitement, and whether it is because he wants to kill George or because he was asked to bring affection to him is unknown.

The hole, somehow, opens up to a mineshaft, bringing Dream a pleasant delight. There, he finds quite the fruitful plethora of iron ingots, and he takes out his crafting table. After a bit of remembering the recipe, he names three cornflowers: "I" "Love" and "You." This time, the love message from Dream to him is direct, and not strange like all the others.

"They better be worth the levels," Dream says.

"They'? You only needed one."

"Yeah, well, since cornflowers are your favorite I thought I'd bring more."

A pause.

Then, "Well, uh. Thank you."

Dream huffs, amused, "You're welcome."

There is something that always nags him about George. He's silly—wanting affection back and forth, but when he actually receives it he doesn't know what to do. And don't even get started on *giving* affection; Dream runs in circles for it—moreso than he does in strongholds—though it's something he won't ever admit out loud.

Abandoning the mineshaft, and then the plains, and then the forest, he finally pays back a visit to the Nether. Or so at least, he *thinks* it's just a visit.

The portal is calm when they take him through, which he finds strange, but he does not mind it. In front of him appears a sad crater trying to fix itself—damage from when the TNT exploded, and beyond it is a house. It looks terrible, but it is not to his surprise since George built it. It is blue with nether brick accents, a nice spice to it, to say the least, and Dream gives George at least *some* credit, especially since he can't see the colors of nether brick.

"George!" Dream calls, taking a step in, "I brought you the cornflowers."

"Yeah, hold on. I'm finishing the bedroom."

He walks further, "Well, it won't matter because I'm gonna kill you."



*Wait... Bedroom? We're in the Neth—*

And just like that, the floor gapes open to a pit of lava.

"W H A T ? !"

And in the drastic increase in vertigo, Dream takes out his water bucket only for it to hiss at the heat.

"No!"

But it is too late. The pool of simmering fever swallows him whole, and he can see George's faint silhouette double over in laughter and triumph, the son of a bitch.

"AHA !!!!!!" George caterwauls, "YEAH! You're so bad. I completely *destroyed* you."

Dream wakes up in the cool, sickening grass of a spruce forest, and he is so angry.

"What *was* that?!"

His only reply is more laughter.

"No, that's cheating. You are such an idiot."

"I—" George struggles to breathe, "I won, stupid. I *killed* you."

Dream can feel George fall out of his gamer chair, the loser, and he is so, *so* angry.

"No, that's cheating. *You* called off the game because you're a *brat* and *I* had to make you feel better."

George keeps giggling, "No, *I* only said I was going to stop chasing you until you brought me something. And I did start a survival world without you."

"That is so unfair you *tricked* me."

"I mean, that *is* the only way I'll win."

"I called off the manhunt to comfort *you*."

"That's your problem. Well.. my plan *was* your problem. I never technically called the manhunt off."

"I can't believe you."

"I can't believe you either."

"If I just went off to kill the dragon it'd be pointless. And also a boring video."

"It's not boring anymore."

*Huh?*

Dream takes a moment of thought, "What do you mean? Are you recording??"

His only response is an incredibly loud laugh, and he rests his exasperated expression in his hands.

"Ohhh my God. You're so annoying."

More laughing, and then a [*GeorgeNotFound tried to swim in lava*] in the chat. Confused, Dream tilts his head, only to be interrupted by apologetic arms wrapped around his own.

"I'll admit. It was a little mean," George says softly.

Dream scoffs, "A 'little'?"

"Okay, it was very mean," He admits, even softer this time, "Rematch?"

"Fine."

"You seemed like you wanted it."

"I want to see your house first."

The trip to the portal takes quite a bit, but when they arrive there, its chanting has remained quiet. Dream will have to take note of its pattern of cries. Heat crashes into the both of them once again, and this time, he pauses a moment to observe the writhing air in the seething fever. This brings him some calm, strangely.

George removes the pressure plate below before completely walking into the house. With it deactivated, the floor rips apart in a bright grin, and he goes, presumably to a storage room, for more wood. Dream watches as George turns the smile faceless, and also develops the urge to push him in.

And so, he does.

"Wh—Dream."

And so George burns to a crisp. Dream pettily laughs—satisfaction at small vengeance.

But of course, something tosses him in as well, and strangely the lava bites with warmth and not hostility. He looks up to see George's still, but cocky, silhouette. The son of a bitch.

"How did you get there already?!"

"Respawn anchor. I knew you were going to do that."

Waking up yet again in the cool, sickening spruce forest, Dream rolls his eyes, that is to say if he has any.

"You're so annoying."

## Chapter 3

The sea water sinks into George's skin, rendering him pretty damn cold, and the dolphin next to him chirps its understanding. A silent "thank you" is indicated with a nod. They continue like this for a few minutes, letting the calm water stroke his hair, albeit she does so in contempt. George doesn't mind it at all—the least she can do is take him away from Dream.

This time, it's one hit and he's done for.

A shipwreck calls to him from a distance—quite an epic opportunity for loot indeed. Weaving through the dense kelp, the wood of the boat whines in agony—harmonious with the current's flow—and he finds solace in the one chest that has all the iron, along with its amiable friend, the diamond.

"Ugh, you found diamonds already?" Dream says.

George laughs vainly, "Yeah, I'm just too good."

"I bet it's just one."

And of course, he's right. If lucky enough, a player will get one diamond from one shipwreck at most. A shame, really, but it only seems fair, though not in George's eyes when he is trying to win. Regardless, he receives a satisfactory, if not bountiful, amount of supplies: twenty two ingots—enough for nearly full iron—and twelve batches of wheat, a perfect set of four bread loaves.

George pushes himself between the openings of the ship, now finding that he's about to drown. The dolphin seems to accompany him on his journey to the surface, or so he thinks, because a minute later he notices that it ignores his pleas for air.

Then, he realizes it is Dream's, and does a double take.

"Wh—You're here already!?"

His only response is a laugh, but then a stuttered gasp, as Dream has become aware of his locked movement underwater and the tables have turned.

"Oh—no, I forgot— George, lemme go."

"Why would I do that?"

"Please! C'mon, I'm drowning!"

"Yeah? And?"

"George. *Please*. I'll get you—I'll get you enchroma glasses, or something. Just let me go."

A theatrical pause.

"You're going to have to try harder than that," George deadpans, "You think the risk of my life is worth enchroma glasses?"

"Well, I'd thought you'd fall for me harder that way," a tinge of a smirk to Dream's voice.

And likewise, he drowns for it.

"You're so annoying," George rolls his eyes in amusement.

"It was worth a try."

"It totally was not."

George resumes his speedrun, but this time more appreciative of the water despite her lack of reciprocation—after all, *he* is the one who robbed her goods and choked a man with *her* hands. He side-eyes the dolphin, who looks at him apologetically, but he knows it is not its fault. It is merely doing what it is programmed to do. Swimming down to Dream's funeral, hoping it is not his last. George collects quite the bit of food—an unintentional love letter to him—and he thanks fate for it instead.

The sun turns bored and starts her quest downward in her horizon bed. The water, too, wishes him neither a "goodbye" nor a "bad-bye", but a type of "bye" nonetheless, and sends him toward the edges of the shore. Cacti neutrally stare at him as well.

However, the mobs beg to differ in hostility, though it is more of his salty taste that they are interested in. With a concentrated breath, he makes his first set of armor, hoping it'll be his only set for their game of cat and mouse. Unfortunately, the boots will have to wait their turn, but he doubts they will mind because he looks up to see a desert teeming with mindless foes and a cumbersome journey.

The sand is not his friend, nor has it ever been, but he prays to the God he doesn't believe in that they'll get along for him to make it for the night. He manages to zip through dozens of hungry hands and curious arrows, albeit with the pale ground grasping at his feet in mutual annoyance. The signal of contrast in the far distance tells him to go there, and what do you know—

A desert temple. How lucky.

The sand below his feet ceases, turning to its tougher friend, sandstone. It's rather dark in the desert temple, but it is to be expected. Taking out a pickaxe, though a shitty stone one, George tears through the ground next to the terracotta and leaps down to break the pressure plate. The pale walls look down on him in contempt, but he can't blame them for it. The loot seems to have the same opinion—nothing but bones and rotten flesh and string. Six iron.

Not bad, but not good either.

He sinks below the floor to grab the temple's *real* heart—its dynamite. Surely, it can be used for something. Scrambling out, George's silhouette blends right in with the night sky as he looks for the contrast of a bright lava pool. He makes himself a bucket.

"Oh, George..." drawls Dream.

George rolls his eyes, somewhat relieved to hear his teasing, "What?"

"Oh, George!!" Dream says again.

He takes a look around, only to find nothing, "You're so annoying."

The only response he gets is a giggle.

Ignoring Dream's further taunts, George's feet revisit the loose sand, and greets the water once again to pick up a souvenir, though now at a river instead of a shore, and upon closer inspection, there is in fact a lava pool close by. Unfortunately, like the rest of the desert, it is not alone.

After struggling to approach its unfriendly bubbles, the pond of red hisses at him in protest as George pours water over it. George, too, hisses back at the heat. Annoyingly, he lacks the knowledge to make a portal as quickly as Dream does. He should really learn some day— it'd make the process much faster.

But now is not the time to ask.

One by one, and painstakingly, the bold obsidian solidifies itself. Several mobs grasp their appendages at him, whatever they are, which he irritatingly slashes away hoping some of them will fall to the lava's hunger.

"Ugh, there's so many mobs," he mutters instinctively.

"Well, what do you expect? You're in a des—," comes an unexpected response, "*oh*. Oops."

In a panic, George turns around to see the faint green(yellow?) outline right at his nose, "Wh— *again*?!"

The appearance of Dream is enough to choke him, and maybe "choke" would be an underestimation, because a wooden axe is inches away from his neck, though it does take him at least a little more than a second to remember how to breathe, so maybe "choke" is sufficient enough after all.

"Oh.. I was *so* close," comes a very expected laugh, "to chopping your pretty little head off."

*Pretty?* Much worse— *little?*

George gathers enough courage to reply in amusement, "You scared me."

"I meant to do that."

"Of course, you did. How're you catching up so fast?"

"No reason."

Picking up his water, George backs away, careful as not to fall in the lava—karma for hissing back, he supposes. The sand feels sympathy for him, and drags him away as he regains his will.

George continues backwards, still locking eyes with Dream even though he's given up squirming. Instead, Dream watches George escape with an interested irritation and an emotionally hungry drool to his disposition.

"Ugh, you're so annoying," Dream says.

"What else am I meant to do?"

"Die? What else?"

George rolls his eyes internally in place of physically, for fear that Dream will break away from his frozen position if he does so. After a safe distance, he turns around and grimaces as he hears more of the lava pool humbles itself to obsidian. Another will have to be found.

He leads with a trail of bedtime monsters, half who chase him, and half who chase Dream. Deciding that he'll bear the pain to relieve them of running, he stares right at Dream while he's midstep.

"Uh oh," a nervous laugh, "Oh, you can't be serious, George."

And a creeper comes hisses happily to Dream, ready to end both of their lives in the most exciting way possible—with an explosion. A gasp can be heard when it flashes, and finally the clouds of sand float in the air.

"I take no chances, Dream."

"Of course you don't," comes a playful, rasped spit.

Judging that he's done sufficient damage and spent sufficient time, George sprints away, leaving Dream to be mauled by the rest. It's cruel, but it must be done.

"Get back here—no!"

A cocky smile spreads on his face as a death message appears in chat; he'll have to remember to thank that skeleton—and that creeper, wherever it watches now—later.

Playing with Dream has always been like playing with vile, though he supposes it's no different from an actual dream. You'd think it'll be enjoyable, but in reality, it's tough. Dreams always have their complications—difficult to grasp until you know their true intricacies.

And that is George's challenge to figure out, but until then, he has yet to know the true satisfaction of accomplishing so.

But even *that* might as well be a figment of imagination—another type of dream.

Judging that there is no other lava pool to be found in the desert, he scuffles away to a forest. A birch one, to be exact— Dream's favorite, and also a reminder why George hates it so much. They stare at him with their indifferent markings in return, preferring the now-rising sun.

He continues his search, and eventually he finds another lake of lava. Reminding himself to be nice to it, he digs a hole into the ground a safe distance away and places a block of TNT. The handful of flint and steel clicks sharply, and the ground implodes soon enough. He does this a few more times until there is a decent, small cave. After hopping in, he places water at the ceiling and goes back and forth with the lava until the portal is complete. The lava pool appreciates his craft.

The water is collected, calm in its bucket, and the click of the flint sends the entrance in a loud, ghostly caterwaul, but before he goes in, he makes sure to close off the top of his artificial cave.

Now deeming it safe, the portal's purple howls take George in, and the netherrack forms around him like skittering spiders. Likewise, the air wiggles in heat, nearly melting his body. The Nether seethes, though it is not at him, or so at least *this* time it is not.

"Ugh," Dream makes an irritated sound, "Took you long enough."

"You literally washed the other lava pool away. And don't you take a while to find one, too?"

"...No. Shut up."

George's reply is only a giggle. He scours around for a bit, and what do you know—a fortress right across a lake. How lucky.

Perking up in delight at the bold contrast of brick against a rough red, or whatever color it's supposed to be, he walks along its edge at the safest distance possible, careful as not to disturb the

ocean of heat. He and Dream know its pain too well. Its retaliations are nothing to brush away. The soulsand below him drags at his feet, desperate for a human meal, but unfortunately, George abandons them for its less needy friend, gravel. It crunches under each step until he finally makes it across.

Scaling up the netherbrick, George feels his hands grow tired, but he manages it nonetheless.

"What? I can't even find your portal yet—did you go into a cave?" A pleasant uneasiness to George's ears, and all he can do is laugh.

"I'm not telling you~" He teases.

"No way, this is the lava pool you would've gone to."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Ugh, you're so annoying."

George smiles, letting a cocky silence sit between them. Dream can figure it out on his own; he's sure of it. Then, he'll call George "such an idiot."

"Oh my god... so stupid," is Dream's final, irritated mutter.

Well, he was close.

Regardless, he lets the nether fortress enclose him, whispering not with life, but rather the undead. Nevertheless, it does not make him feel less hollow. His armor makes an indifferent crackle with the bricks as he walks in further. Annoyingly, he lacks the knowledge to navigate with the lava-well method like Dream does, but seeing as Dream is still a broken compass despite knowing, he judges that it would've been useless.

It's a little too late to ask, anyways.

George continues, listening for the ghostly chants of very valuable and very bright men. Despite his searching, the fortress only answers with more tunnels and balconies. Releasing a breath of irritation, he passes the same stairs to the same intersection. The lull of the dark walls now deem itself a bore to his eyes despite his excitement of their contrast earlier.

"Ooooh," Dream says with a glint of hunger.

George turns an ear, interested in what he has to say, "What?"

"Nothing."

And the message in chat proves itself something to pay attention to.

"You got to the fortress already?!"

A smug laugh, and in return, an irritated huff.

"Oh, George~!" An unsettling, chirpy voice, "Where are you? Come on, don't leave me alone, George."

George's breath is held, though it is not by him, and it isn't the heat, but rather by some fear factor outside of his will. Even the nether brick quiver at Dream's presence, and in spite of their differences, George can understand why. Dream most definitely does, too, because sometimes he

scares himself—just like actual dreams.

Sneaking, George scans for a name, but alas, the fortress does not answer in the slightest—not even in the lava wells that bubble with their usual loneliness. Dream is not found, though to be fair, he has always been an excellent victim of a winning game of hide and seek—again, just like actual dreams.

Continuing away, George tries his damndest to step lightly as he can so as to not make a sound, and thankfully, the floor is kind to his situation. He sneaks down stairs and away from possible stares, though as many times he does so, he fails to hear the anguished cries of the men he wants to see.

Instead, he hears a delightful cheer from the man he doesn't.

"Come out to play, George~" Dream taunts.

"Leave me alone, Dream," George lets out an unsettled laugh.

"George, come on," Dream continues with the same hint of an unhinged smile, "Just play with me. I'll cry myself to sleep if you don't."

Again, George decides to ignore Dream's further taunts like always. They always manage to get to him, no matter how endearing the sentiment sounds, and he doesn't know if he likes that or not. Either way, he does not plan to admit so.

That would be stupid.

Despite traversing the structure more times than he can count—that is, *if* he can even count—it proves itself unwilling to help him. He comes across a ledge and peers down to the lake like an old friend, but he decides that today he won't accept its hand. He's not ready for that. Pivoting back and letting the crumbs of brick hurtle downwards, he makes an irritated noise.

Or he would have, if he hasn't gasped at the sick silhouette of a hungry green man just blocks away from reaching him. At eye contact, Dream stays suspended in the air from leaping for his failed final hit, twitching in agitation, and also strangely, a hint of panic.

"George! Lemme go! *Please*," he unusually begs.

"Why, what's wrong?" George replies with a confused, but cocky smile.

"Wither Skeletons! C'mon, George," Dream says, "Please?"

Wither Skeletons. Dream's least favorite, and also the mob he fears the most, understandably. George decides he should like them more for that reason, as much of a double-edged sword it would be.

And there they are—three of them—sprinting by the other end of the tunnel, which is, quite frankly, very troubling.

"What—Why would I do that?" George resumes to Dream.

"Because you can't fight them yourself."

And he is mostly right about that, much to George's chagrin.

"George, please. You know I don't like them. I'll get you something—I'll get you chocolate raisins,



I'll tell you I love you. Just let me go."

A pause. There isn't much time to pause.

"How many chocolate raisins?"

A sultry reply, "As many as you want."

A concentrated thought. There isn't much time for a concentrated thought. Regardless, he holds his breath in a risky grimace and looks away for Dream to fend himself off. Taking netherrack, he towers up to find solace in low-hanging glowstone. It seems that Dream has finished his fight, though with the last surges of his emotional hunger now gone.

Or so George thinks, because upon a further glance, he receives an arrow to the face.

"Wh—You had a bow?!"

His only response is an arrogant chuckle and a drastic increase in vertigo.

"Oh, no—nonono—"

And the lava lake below him welcomes him with open arms, feeling a sad sympathy for his predicament. He feels his body simmer in panic and anger.

"No!"

The hard, but cool, sickly ground hits George's back and his breath is knocked from his lungs. He's reminded why he hates rain so much as the sound of its pitiful patter laughs at his failure. Not long after, Dream appears beside him, a smug smile tagged on his face, despite just withering away.

"Well, that was fun."

"Cheater. You made me fall with an arrow."

"What!? That was within the scopes of the game—using a bow is perfectly fair," Dream retorts, "You just didn't think about it. *And* you would've died anyway."

"No, I could've just bridged over the wither skeletons and ran."

"...True. I forgot you weren't stupid."

"I hate you."

Dream comes over to give George a hug, "No, you don't,"

"Shut up. You're getting me chocolate raisins."

"Okay, okay. I'll keep my promise."

And that is the one difference between this Dream and regular dreams, as far as George can tell. A domesticated bliss.

## Chapter 4

The leaves of birch and oak trees wave their condolences to Dream as he runs for his life. Usually, this does not happen, but since this time, George can get him in one hit, he begs to differ otherwise. Momentarily freezing their chase, Dream turns around to lock George in a concentrated, tired stare. George's response is only the silly flail of his arms, because, quite frankly, he cannot do anything else under Dream's eyes.

And that is not exclusive to games outside of assassin, though he does not plan to admit it.

"Oh, Dream!! Come here!" George sneers, "I'm gonna get you already, haha!"

Dream scoffs, "What? No, you're not."

"We'll see."

"No, you won't. You're colorblind, George."

"I—okay??"

Dream giggles stupidly and not immune to making petty insults. He takes his time to bend down and scope out the field of flowers. Alliums, in particular.

"What're you doing?" George asks.

"Nothing."

Starting to crouch backwards, Dream grabs a bundle of flowers out of the corner of his eyes. Hopefully, they'll comply with his plans for them.

George takes this as an opportunity to tease, "Gifts for me when I kill you?"

"You'll see."

George hums in an amused confusion, "Mhm... Alright, Mr. 'You're colorblind, George'."

"Ugh, whatever."

Dream pauses before deciding to turn away, ripping his gaze for George to break free. The grass and flowers become a blur to him, but their smell still lingers and Dream is getting sick of its sweet pity all the same.

"Leave me alone, George."

George giggles a "no."

The forest opens up to a wide plains biome, which is better, but not enough to deem him safe. Only downside is that there are no two-block spaces to help him speed up, though regardless, they continue running in their game of cat and mouse, fueled solely by their desires to prove themselves.

His inventory is scattered with the miscellaneous—seeds, eggs, dirt, and a sad amount of wood—the game is only at its first steps. He considers them useless, save for the dirt, but he doesn't bother throwing them away just yet, because in the distance, light calls to him from the ground. Dream eyes it hungrily.

When he reaches it, he finds that it is actually a sickly grin, gaping hollow for someone to explore its history, and Dream determines it will be him.

"Come here, Dream. We've been running for ages— I *miss* you."

Now *that* is unusual, but Dream ignores it, "Well, you won't have to worry about that anymore."

He makes a risky leap over the chasm, and immediately turns around to block off his trail before George can do the same.

"What—No!"

A rather bone-chilling crunch against wood planks.

Deciding to be cruel, Dream takes out his only egg and chucks it, further knocking George away with a satisfying crack.

"Wh—Oh my God, I hate you."

George watches himself fall with nothing but a baby chicken floating at its innocent leisure. The eventual death message in chat gives Dream his breath back.

The sky slowly turns asleep, making way for the *real* stars of the night—home to hostile mobs. Dream huffs in agitation, but he considers it could be a double-edged sword if he uses the opportunity right. Using a wooden pickaxe, he mines downwards to the heart of the ravine only to find that George didn't have any items, which he supposes would make sense at this first test-chase in the game, but he accepts it with annoyance nonetheless.

Iron and coal are bountiful even though gathering a sufficient amount proves to be time-consuming. He's set with a decent eighteen pieces of ore and enough to smelt it all. It is not much as he prefers, but then again, nothing is ever much as he prefers, so he gives it the benefit of the doubt. The glassy sky is pitch black now, hovering over him the way his edging watch of George does, except he's not here right now.

George has never been one to hold success with a direct confrontation, though he's only on the tip of the iceberg on figuring that out—not as truthful as he ought to be, but rather, just as truthful as he's got to be. Most of his triumphs are through lies, and Dream gives him the credit—he is very good at lying, though it might be that Dream believes in his own advantages more than he should and as a result, he falls for them.

Scaling back up to the surface, the moon stares straight through his thoughts, but whether it is from pity or from its cryptic nature is unknown to him. He revisits the grass, its lush blades giving his feet a soft rest before he towers up for the night. Laying his furnaces in a fortification, he peers down his makeshift safety, hearing mobs bustle mindlessly below him as he waits for his food and iron to cook.

"Oh, Dream~" George taunts.

"Oh my God. What?"

"What're you... doing up there?"

Dream tries to throw him off with an insult, "I'm *cooking*, what's *wrong* with you?"

"I—ok, whatever," George replies, "Just come down here."

"..No?"

Dream scans for a familiar head hiding amongst the scattered crowd. A contrast of white pops out against the waves of green. A full suit of it, in fact.

"What?!? You have full iron already!?"

George giggles snarkily, "Hehe, come down here, Dream~ Pspsp~ Come here!"

"You're so annoying," Dream mutters, "Was there even an achievement for that?"

George only hums in amusement.

And upon further inspection, it's not iron armor at all, but leather armor dyed white.

"Good plan, but you forgot I have better eyes," Dream deadpans, locking George in place with an amused gaze.

"You actually thought I had full iron?" George chuckles before realizing so, "Wh—no—let me go."

"No way."

Dream watches in satisfaction as more mobs converge against George who only has a shield to fend himself off.

"Dream, please, like actually, let me go."

A silence replaces any type of response, and he moreover sits back to relax like a cruel king to a poor, sorry fucker. The loud rustle of leaves surrounding the plains seem to have the same opinion, swishing cheerfully at George's demise.

"Wait, Dream, I'm gonna die!" He begins to beg, "C'mon, I'll—I'll get you some Takis?"

Dream pauses in thought—the game has not progressed by too much, so perhaps it wouldn't matter whether he dies here or not, and a grand prize of Takis would be very nice after a hard-earned win indeed—that is, *if* he wins, but he does not like to think about the possibility that he might lose. He rolls his eyes over in an irritated amusement.

"Fine, I needed to get my furnaces anyway," Dream finally answers.

George regains touch to the ground and scampers off, leading a trail of mobs who eventually disperse from boredom. Dream watches vigilantly as George reaches the edge of his render distance. Judging a decent safety, he collects his materials to make a set of armor and store a reliable amount of food. Soon, he meets the grass again, as well as the friendly wave of the sun eyeing him over the horizon. Relief mellows the tension in his mind.

On his endless run, he picks up water—the plains biome has a decent number of ponds, scattering cozily here and there, but most notably, not lonely. Bedtimes mobs eventually sink to the light rays and spiders have lost their hostile nature. He'll just have to keep watch for creepers, the bastards.

Deciding that even though the water is not lonely from itself, he confirms that it definitely does have a lack of lava. With a slight grimace, Dream digs straight downwards—a sin that he's gotten too used to, but George still loves him nonetheless, because he does it, too.

He has a water bucket to keep him safe, anyways.

The tunnel turns dark as he fills it back up, hoping it will stall him some grief later if George does find it, and soon, the hollow of a cave greets him with ominous arms. He travels through its branches to scope out any light, but even so, he finds no lava of the sort—not even from a single source block, and with irritation, he finds another spot to dig down. It is only on the thirtieth level, after all.

He nearly falls to lava when he reaches y-eleven, though it doesn't matter because he never learns from this mistake. Ever. The pond of red collaborates with him well—they all do. He's mastered their understanding, at least more so than George does. He'll have to teach him some time.

But now is a little too late to offer.

The small opening of stone becomes dimmer as more obsidian is formed, however not by much. Dream seems to have a sharp eye, much like a wolf, but in reality, his brightness setting is set beyond the scale. By contrast, his personality is exactly like one despite his smiling disposition. Some have likened it to an unsettling image, though it is something he can't blame them for.

The portal opens with a soft howl when he lights it up, and the purple face stares right back at his white and green figure. Violet particles urge him hungrily, so he takes a step over the dark foundation, and like always, he's met with the familiar, cruel heat.

A terrible spawn—stuck on an island. An island of bare obsidian and what is probably a total of three blocks of netherrack, in fact.

So much for playing nicely with lava, though perhaps it is a balance to its ways.

"Oh my God," George whines, "Where'd your portal go? Did you go underground?"

Dream laughs, though George sees it as more of a hint than a snarky reply.

"Ugh, you did, didn't you? You're so bad."

Suddenly, but sensibly irritated, "Wh—? We both know what it's like finding lava pools. I had no *choice* but to dig down."

"Well, at least that confirms it."

Dream pauses before his realization, "I hate you."

George giggles, the bastard.

"Shut up. You were gonna have to dig down anyway."

More giggles, "You're too easy, Dream."

"Says the one who never wins as a speedrunner."

"...Maybe so," George unusually admits—Dream has mellowed him to an extent, that is for sure.

And their conversation ends at that. By that time, Dream has already towered up to a platform more connected to the main bodies of the Nether. Looking down at the lonely portal, Dream gets a very humbling experience, to the say the least, which should be noted as something necessary, especially for a person like him. He is a small contrast of green against the scarlet, boiling land—though it's not like George would notice. The Nether is uncaring of his needs.

Uncaring of its *own* needs, as well.

The safety of the netherrack walls give him relief, and so he walks along to explore. The Nether itself is indifferent to him, however, but he appreciates her nonetheless—the least she can do is take Dream away from George, and she's proven to be reliable over and over again.

But then again, she is only a third party, or rather, a double edged sword, and he and George are only playing their game with her in commensalism, though the real question would be if they really get any benefits aside from fueling their emotional hungers.

The netherrack opens to a field of mushrooms and dots of fire, but the space is otherwise closed off. On his way, he picks them up—hopefully, they will comply with his plans later. The trek is rather short relative to his other runs, but the streams of lava from the ceiling look down on Dream in disinterest nonetheless, and maybe even in arrogance, but he doesn't mind.

Eventually, the distinct color of brick shows itself to him, half-buried into the ground.

And of course, George's advancement makes its way to chat to follow his.

"Pfff—*this* was your spawn?" He laughs, "What's wrong with you, Dream?"

"What do you mean 'What's wrong with' me—what am I meant to do?"

More laughter. Dream really has to get going before George's taunts annoy him enough to slow him down.

This nether fortress is thankfully less difficult to traverse than he expects, though mainly because he sees a Blaze spawner in the first intersections. Their ghostly howls have stopped bothering him, and he disposes three of them rather quickly despite their fiery pleas to live. In turn, he is rewarded with two Blaze rods.

"Oh, you're there already. Must not be far from here..."

*Shit.*

Dream builds a barrier between him and the spawner to wait, while also listening for any watchful steps. However, he is only met with absence when he scans the walls for George's name, and whether that is a good thing or a bad thing is up for the future to decide.

Three more Blazes spawn, and Dream takes it as three more rods.

"Oh Dream~"

"What?"

"Where'd you go~?"

"I'm not telling you."

As he waits for more Blazes to kill, he sets down his crafting table, and with a bowl, an allium flower, and each of the mushrooms, he makes suspicious stew—*fire resistance* suspicious stew, to be exact.

He snatches up the last three Blaze rods when the opportunity comes up, though he hears the cold shriek of iron boots dragging across hot brick at the same time.

"Oh, Dream, I can smell you~" A sickly sweet voice echoes through the tunnel.

With a frozen breath despite the heat, Dream digs into the wall and blocks himself in, crouching so as to prevent his nametag from being found. While George's name flashes across his vision, supposedly to the Blaze spawner, Dream mines further towards a different tunnel. Once he pops out, the fortress simmers at him to flee.

And so he does, but the shriek of cold iron boots on hot brick does him dirty, and he hears the screech of George's armor stop after he turns around, albeit frozen under Dream's frightened stare.

"Are you leaving? Don't leave me here, Dream."

"What, no. I mean, yes. I mean—what?"

George hums, unconvinced and scarily saccharine, "Have fun."

"What do you mean?"

"You'll see."

So, here he breaks away from the fortress and meets netherrack— the waves of fire and mushrooms turn to a blur and wave their condolences as Dream runs for his life.

"Dream! Just come here!"

"Leave me alone, George."

A giggle is George's only response back, whatever the *hell* that means.

The overhang cliff meets him soon, and Dream pivots back around to lock George in place, who hungrily stretches around in return, because, quite frankly, he cannot do anything else under Dream's eyes.

Dream assesses his environment— it appears that he's found out what George meant by "You'll see" because his forty-something-block tower is gone and his portal is drowning in lava.

"What? You covered it in lava?!" Dream says, "Oh my God, you're so annoying."

More giggles, "Dream, just give up. I win this round."

Of course, a sane person would think so, too.

But Dream is not sane, nor will he ever be, because he decides to dive in and swim in the angry sea that only ever wants to hurt everybody.

The wind from the fall brings him relief, though he chokes on his suspicious stew. His feet meet a similarly warm sludge, and he hurriedly scrambles to the safety of the portal's purple wisps before it feels the need to sear him again.

"How did you survive that?! Were those fire resistance particles? Where the *hell* did you get fire resistance, Dream?" The pleasant presence of uncertainty to Dream's ears.

"I'm not telling you."

"You have *got* to be joking."

Laughing, though this time, it is from Dream.

"It's not funny."

"It kind of is."

Dream comes out of the portal to meet a more or less displeased air—he finds relief that it is not angry, just agitated by the lava pool. Digging up, an increasing amount of cool air washes over him.

"How'd you get out of there, like actually? You didn't go to a desert temple while I was gone. Did that ravine have a God apple? A mineshaft?"

Deciding to humor him, Dream answers, "Well, you know how I got those flowers?"

"Yeah, what about them?"

"Allium suspicious stew gives you fire resistance for four seconds."

"You're such a loser—did you spend hours on the Minecraft Wiki the other day? Is that why you didn't call?"

"Shut up, it at least worked, okay?"

"I mean, I suppose."

On his search for an enderman, the plains biome eventually grows tired, and he enters the wide arms of the dry savanna—particularly catching his eyes are the friendly roofs of a village. A gasp in delight.

"What?" George says.

As usual, Dream replies with "Nothing."

Practically destroying their houses, he gets plenty of wood, going back and forth with the planks and the logs. The fletching villager is very accommodating—the sticks trade on the first try.

"Oh, you found a village," George comments.

And Dream freezes, looking over to study the lush grass for the contrast of man-made metal.

"What? How'd you get out of there so fast?"

"I'm not there, idiot, it's your trading achievement."

And indeed feeling like an idiot, Dream's shoulders drop their tension, "Oh."

He continues to trade until he receives his schemingly-earned eight ender pearls. The last theoretical four will have to be satisfied by old-fashioned grinding from the little wood that the village has.

After brittling one with Blaze powder, he lets the sky call upon the first Eye of Ender. It pleasantly floats to his right on the plea of tired, determined eyes. Following it, he abandons the savanna, crossing a river, and into a desert. He reminds himself why he hates sand so much when the ground lazily drags at his feet.

Regardless, the travel is desolate. He throws another Eye up, and watches as it nestles itself downwards—surprisingly close for a stronghold. With a shovel he hopes not to call "spoon" again,



he digs in pursuit, eventually coming across stone, and eventually stone brick and stone brick stairs.

"Oh—what? You're there already?"

A silence replaces any response from Dream, who prefers to concentrate than continue George's grab at a distraction, and so he goes searching for one room, and one room only.

But of course, his concentration is cut short from a rival message in chat—George has been on his tail all this time.

"What!? How are you—how'd you get here so fast? I thought you were still in the Nether."

"Took me a while to patch it up, but I MLG blocked on a boat, and well... you took a *while* trading, I guess."

"What? That's not a thing—you're lying."

George doesn't reply, preferring to giggle, but it sends an ice spike to Dream's heart nonetheless. He crouches, careful as not to make his presence known, looking both ways before entering an intersection—as one should. Slinking down under an archway, he breaks the iron door, rather than pressing its button. He always found it strange that mining it down made less noise than opening it.

Soon, the warmth of the End portal room surrounds him eerily—a strange find for someone like a broken compass, and the frames stare at him with the hollow expectation to be appeased for its lack of any previous eyes. No pearls were found in the stronghold's chests, either.

Just his luck, but he breaks the silverfish spawner and enters in the current eight that he has anyways.

"You're dead, Dream—you're actually dead."

So, as it is the only option left, he buries himself into the wall and digs straight up.

"Dream~ Where'd you go??" Another saccharine squeal.

"....None of your business?"

"You know it's my business."

Dream pops out of the sand who tries to suffocate him first, and scrambles away. The taste of his bread is dry, but it keeps him sane as he scours through the desert for a tall, dark, and handsome man—someone certainly unlike George, he notes, but someone certainly difficult to find.

One stands out to him near a distant cactus with a friend, and so he dashes for them. Slashing them with a nonchalant sword, he is given two pearls for his efforts.

"Ugh, you're out, aren't you. Why—didn't you get pearls?" George comments.

"No? I'm still in the stronghold."

"Liar. There's eight eyes in here. You're such a loser."

"Listen, idiot, you know damn well how much wood it takes to trade for a full set."

"Ok, rude. At least I know you're up."

Again, Dream pauses upon realizing he's the idiot, rather than George, "You. Are. *So* annoying."

And all George can do is laugh.

Two other endermen sit on a distant hill and Dream quickly greets them with a determined axe. Biting the dust to their valuables, they drop two more pearls. How lucky.

Dream makes his way back to his hole, the desolate desert whispering him a warning, and he reminds himself why he hates sand once again. Beside the hole is a blue bed, and he looks at it in bewilderment.

"Why'd you put a bed here? I'm breaking it."

"Thought you weren't gonna come up."

At least that bit makes sense. He jumps down the hole as the blur of rocks greet him with their condolences, the flash of wind stopping when he places a water bucket at his feet. Stone brick walls look at him with worry. He hates their pity, but he only supposes it would be sensible due to his lack of direction.

Once again, he slinks down the same stairs and under the same archway, warmth from the lava of the portal room engulfing him in a welcome embrace now that he has sufficient eyes. After satiating the frames, it howls thunderously, probably enough to deafen him.

And that makes all the difference, because he doesn't hear the rumble of stone brick being broken from above and the sickly sound of a sword going through his back when he takes a step.

"I—What!?" Dream exclaims, his feet hitting the sorry grass of spawn and the flowers looking at him apologetically.

George can only laugh, "I just *destroyed* you, oh my God."

"You were hiding!?"

"Yeah."

"Oh my God—that is so unfair."

"Ambushing was the only way to get you."

"You were guarding the stupid fortress—I mean, *stronghold*."

More laughter.

"Five bags," Dream says.

"What?"

"You're getting me five bags of Takis. And a pizza."

George softens to a giggle, "Alright."

Soon the grass next to Dream is crushed after George teleports to him. Dream rolls his eyes as he lies down, tired from his cut-off journey.

"I guess I'll give you a surprise, since you're being a whiny baby," George offers.

Dream looks over to him in an amused annoyance, "What?"

In George's hands is an allium flower, and it makes Dream so angry.

"You had one, too? Oh my God... I shouldn't have told you," Dream digs his face into his palms.

"Why else would you pick flowers?"

"You're such an... A-hole."

"Wh—for *what*?"

"I thought I lost you. And then you lied."

"Well.. that's rather touching. And also I had to."

"Shut up. You know what I meant."

"Right," George giggles, "So, what type of pizza do you want?"

"Ricotta and spinach."

"Sounds good."

## Chapter 5

### Chapter Summary

This one is a little shorter than the other ones, but I hope you still enjoy it!

The heat from the Nether sends him off with a soft goodbye, and Dream re-enters the Overworld with a slight satisfaction and a slight grimace. The cave he made his portal at is a comfortable temperature, but he knows he'll have to abandon that later. Digging up towards the basement of the igloo he found prior, he hopes the two villagers will greet him back with warm arms rather than the air's biting cold. As far as he can remember, the zombified one had grunted quietly as the living one next to him had looked at Dream in a sort of loneliness. He recalls trembling with a golden apple and potion of weakness in his hands. A sad reality for any entity, indeed.

He reaches the stone brick soon enough— bitter in response to both him and his iron pickaxe.

Of course, only to find that both villagers are gone.

"You killed them!?" Dream exclaims, "What's wrong with you?"

George laughs, "Well, what else am I meant to do?"

Dream climbs up the ladder, and upon poking out, he nearly chokes at the sight of George sitting nonchalantly with a bucket of lava, giggling saccharine all the same. In fact, the entire igloo has melted and there's lava everywhere. Dream pushes himself up to run as George spills it on the ground and the hissing sludge kisses his feet just enough for it to hurt. A lot.

"No—come back here!"

If Minecraft had a function that really paid attention to the sensitivities of temperature in depth, Dream—the poor, sorry Floridian fucker, would be dead by now— shivering to the indifferent tundra's cold. He says he likes winter, presumably because it is the most tolerable season there. Elsewhere, however, anyone would doubt it. Maybe his aptitude to the Nether, or at least most of the time, is because of this reason.

George, by contrast, probably doesn't have too much of a problem, the British bastard.

So, good thing he's only slightly shivering, because George will tease him about it if he ever catches it, but right now they are once again running in their game of cat and mouse. Maybe it's something worth taking notice of.

"Leave me alone, George!"

"What? I promise I'm just keeping you warm!" He teases.

And, to George's credit, he is. In fact, Dream is on fire, and gagging on his lackluster steak. The bright tundra's snow sears his brain with a headache, and his eyes flash tired from its white reflection as it grips at his feet. The rustle of few on-watching spruce leaves laughs at him, and he reminds himself why birch is his favorite.

They continue further, and Dream eventually spots a promising sea of ice. Sucking in a breath, he jumps and places water below him.

"Wh—no!"

Crashing onto the spread of frozen blocks, he pulls out a boat, and makes his goddamn merry way out. Behind him, George struggles out of his water.

"Oh my God, you are so annoying," George says.

Dream can only watch his fear turn into relief, and then into an unsettled chuckle.

The ice below him is stubborn, instead preferring to carry him rather than the other way around. Perhaps it's his mutual misunderstanding with truly cold temperatures, but he rides on nonetheless. The patterns in the frost haze themselves together as he gains speed, probably uninterested in Dream as much as he is uninterested in them.

A long silence ensues, now only entertained by the ghostly breaths that show themselves in the numbing climate—uncaring of his needs, even more so than the Nether—in place of his and George's usual banter. Dream, though disgruntled at the mere thought of admitting so, does like when their bickering satisfies the awkward tension when travelling.

The wind seems to hiss in his face, which is, to be frank, quite rude, but it lessens its bite as the appearing ice spikes urge it to give him some sympathy. He is a foreigner to their biome, after all. The frozen towers, however, don't help him too much—they find contentment in solely preferring to watch him speed off for his life. Dream would beg to differ, but he can't do anything to convince them otherwise, and so he continues on with only his reflection on the frigid surface to accompany him.

Pulling out a Blaze rod, he holds it so tightly, it might keep him sane.

After a long slippery journey, Dream crashes into what is apparently a slushy delta, bitter water sinking into his figure. He staggers up and chokes at its rather unfriendly disposition towards him. Ahead of him is unsurprisingly more snow, and he prays to the god that he doesn't believe in that it'll be nicer to him just this once.

Thankfully, he is met with a softer layer of frost that gives him some rest upon trekking up the shore. In the distance appears the welcoming idleness of a spruce village— a savior to his tired state.

So, as you do, he runs, pulls out an axe, and starts to destroy it, and likewise, the villagers do not mind at all. The feeling of hitting wood over and over again soon grows impatient to his ears, as well as the occasional hum of its inhabitants.

"Oh Dream~"

His eyes shift around. Nothing. George is not found.

He continues getting wood, "I hate you. You're not even here."

A smug, annoying giggle.

Dream goes on to another house to completely maul, only for George to pop out with an axe of his own. Grimacing, Dream narrowly dodges the slight caress of its metal to his neck and smells the nauseating taste of iron both red and white. He then pivots with a held breath, his feet hard on the

frost as he books away.

"What!? You were here?"

"It's not that hard to make a boat, Dream."

They weave around the village—Dream zigzagging haphazardly around the iron golem as it swings its arms in a disgruntled walk.

"Why can't I hit y—*uh oh*."

The golem grumbles its anger, turning to George more sharply than he prefers, which is to not turn at all. Dream laughs at him, a maniacal tint to his voice.

"Hold on, no—nono *please*," George begs, turning to run, "Wait—I didn't mean to, I promise."

He towers up on blocks of dirt, or rather, he tries to, because Dream swings his axe around and it fits itself pleasantly into George's side, knocking him off from somewhat of a safe haven.

"You've got to be joking," George mutters just as the golem raises its arms.

A frighteningly audible crack sounds through the cold air as George is pummeled up, and unfortunately for him, the landing down is not friendly either.

"Oh my God," George whines, "You're so annoying."

And like always, it is replied with a laugh, if not initially a wheeze.

Dream walks over— a bounce to his step— collecting the materials George died with. Quite the bit of mutton. He slides out his sword, the sharp ring of it sounding through the town, though he knows that no one except for George intends to listen. Acknowledging George's lack of presence in a sort of pride, Dream wacks the golem with a lax swing, and scampers off to tower just high enough so it cannot reach him. He looks at it with a gleeful indifference, and so, the hunger of his blade is satisfied by the consecutive bites it takes, followed by the golem's frustrated echoes of iron against iron.

A petty vengeance, but only so that it benefits Dream.

He hops down to snatch its four ingots. He doesn't necessarily need them—only stealing them before George gets any advantage. What he does leave behind, though, is the red poppy that he begins to carefully plant on the ground.

In hindsight, it is probably rude, because red is one of the colors George cannot see.

Then again, he cannot see green either, so Dream guesses his own presence is just as cruel as well.

He continues gathering wood, now in peace, and the villagers, though less content with his bombardment, still trade. With an inventory full of sticks, he obtains a plethora of emeralds from the fletcher.

As well as a blunt pain to his back. He turns around, to see George fruitlessly fighting with nothing. Laughing.

"You're so annoying—where's your bed? I know you made one," Dream says.

George giggles, "What? No, I didn't."

"You're lying."

And like so, their game of cat and mouse is reversed, though only because George is there to annoy with no other reason. They swift through the snow, but eventually, Dream realizes it is a cold pursuit. Stopping, he slouches his shoulders in a slight irritation.

"Oh my God, whatever," he huffs, and George continues laughing.

Abandoning the chase, he scans the white field for a bed as he turns back to the village. However, no bed comes to his sight. Finding solace in the rumbling feeling it makes, he lazily drags his sword on the ground, and with a begrudgingly interested expression, he eyes George as he runs away, but ultimately decides to leave him be.

He'll finish him off later.

The cleric sits in his cottage, welcoming Dream warmly. He grins back with a bountiful amount of emeralds, and unlike many players, the cleric does not shy away from it.

At least there is *someone* here who appreciates his smiles.

He leaves the cottage with a satisfying handful of pearls. All twelve, in fact. Crumbling a Blaze rod into powder, the first eye is subject to experimentation, and he watches as it floats directly ahead of him. He sprints towards it, catching it as he continues, and so the run begins.

But it is not kind to him.

The sun starts to show its indifference, a very unfortunate goodbye to his only source of heat indeed, and the arms of the night coldly welcome mobs. He scoffs an annoyed breath at the dimming horizon, but shows it does not bother him *too* much in case the moon decides to betray him.

He scales to the high of a mountain, dotted with the lonely scatter of taiga trees, and slowly, they are accompanied with the soon-to-spawn strays whose curious arrows barely skin him. Bounding on, the soft sheet of white below him makes a pitiful crunch each time he steps. His feet have gotten very tired of it, preferring the curl of grass out of anything else at the moment. Picking up a block of water on the way, he finds the overhang and leaps off, and like always, he softens his fall with the same aforementioned block.

"Oh, Dream~"

"What?" Exasperated, he looks around him, most prominently up, because there George is, jumping down to him with a bloodthirsty stone axe.

"What—!?"

Too slow to pick it back up, George lands on the water that spreads and swings a hit at Dream's shoulder, bringing him down quite the heart and a half, which isn't bad, but it's still a concerning amount, considering he had nine to start. Drawing a risky breath, he fulfills his sword's need by slashing at George, and twice, it finds itself biting at the abdomen. Another shriek of George's axe is satiated at Dream's side.

That is another heart and a half down. He has six left to spare.

Turning to run, he's soon met with a more populated spruce forest and weaves under them. Thankfully, their leaves, instead of laughing rustles, help block George off in collaboration with his

well-placed cobblestone.

"No—Oh my God. You're literally so annoying," George complains, only to be responded with a nonchalant chuckle.

Perhaps Dream will learn to appreciate spruce a little more.

The bland taste of mutton allows him relief as he watches his hearts refill, but after ripping through the forest, he is revisited with more tundra and his relief is replaced with displeasure.

*You gotta be kidding me.*

With the only option he has left, he continues sprinting forward. Behind him, George lashes his way out of the leaves, a snake's stare to his eyes.

That is, until a stray's arrow hacks into his flesh, and he sounds out a rather frightened gasp.

A gasp. He *must* be low, the bastard.

The snake's stare now shifting to Dream, he wolfs after his hunter, and likewise, his hunter makes no hesitation to pivot. George's movements find themselves slow from the arrow's effect, so Dream catches up to him faster than he prefers, which is to not catch up at all. Unfortunately for him, Dream's sword finds a pleasurable and painful last presence in his back, and the death message in chat gives Dream satisfaction.

"Finally," Dream says, rolling his eyes, "You're not gonna win this one, George."

"Mhmm.. Sure," drawls an reluctant George.

Dream swiftly kills the nearby stray—a petty vengeance, but beneficial to only him—and resumes his journey towards the stronghold.

The snow eventually relaxes, turning to its less apathetic friends, the grass and stone. They are hard on his feet, the grass less so, but they welcome him with a less frigid—not necessarily *warm* per se—step. The biome's both oak and spruce leaves wave at him, rustling not in laughter, but in warning. He doesn't know what they're talking about, gathering yet another bucket of water before carrying on. Their two-block high openings give him some sympathy, and help him speed through.

Upon exiting the rather dense forest, he is greeted by the open and warm arms of a plains biome. Its flowery inhabitants stare at him with a curiosity that he does not intend to satisfy, unfortunately. George will probably do that instead.

The next eye subject to experimentation is compliant with Dream's hopes, thankfully, and veers to his left when he releases it to the sky. It must be near. Following it, he snatches it from the disinterested air and continues in its direction. His path opens to a shallow lake, and throwing it once again, it falls, splashing into the middle of the water. He swims over and starts digging.

His arms eventually grow tired of gravel and sand and dirt, but stone greets him soon enough, as well as its less popular companions, granite, and andesite. He's relieved to avoid diorite, though.

He thinks it's an eyesore. Everyone does.

And speaking of eyes, Dream gets his [*Eye Spy*] advancement after a shy thirty blocks down, which is relatively quick for a stronghold. Its stone brick residents stare eagerly at his presence, but George obviously does the opposite.



"You've been *running*," he observes, and frighteningly less surprised than Dream expects.

"Obviously."

George hums, but nothing further. Dream presumes it an interesting response, but, like a fool, he does not make any other notes.

Dream goes back to slinking through the stronghold, and like always, it is not kind to him, or rather, his brain isn't as kind to himself as he thinks. He passes a corner, or two, or maybe three.

It doesn't matter— they are the same ones.

Staring at the bricks in contempt, he turns around to hopefully a different direction this time.

He traverses its many floors and weaves, albeit troublingly, through the cobwebs of its libraries. Moss on the walls look at him condescendingly, for he's a newcomer to their maze. Upon continuing, he finds that the stronghold has been slaughtered by a ravine's bright smile, and peering at the edge of a cliff, he finds lava's warmth waiting for him with open arms.

So much for being cold just a while ago, but on the upside, the teeth of the iron bars of the portal room peek out on the other side.

In addition to George's presence popping behind him, noted by the crumble of cobble and a new, brandished sword.

"Oh, you're here," he says nonchalantly, back again in full iron.

"Wh—how'd you catch up?"

"Uhhh, I followed the compass?"

"Well, obviously."

"Then why'd you ask in the first place?"

"Ok, whatever—shut up and leave me alone."

George laughs, "Why would I?"

And with that, the echoes of metal against metal bite through the air, though this time, it is much more than petty vengeance. Dream grimaces in concentration, holding up his shield, only for it to lose its bearings because George pulls out an axe and sinks its teeth into it.

"Oh my God, you're so annoying," Dream scoffs.

"I'm just too good, and you," George replies, "are dead."

Sounding an unconvinced hum, Dream struggles against that wish, but his sword finally manages to dig through George's stomach, its blade satiated with the flow of a particularly richer type of iron.

"Agh—No!" George hisses, "That hurt."

Dream laughs, "Good."

Dream takes his weapon back from flesh, and George staggers unconsciously towards the cliff of

the ravine. A final, desperate push from Dream sends him plummeting. Unfortunately for him, he fails to soften his fall with water.

"No! Oh my God...." George whines, "I'm so far away..."

Looking down and giggling in triumph, the delightful scatter of items sinking into lava meet Dream's eyes. He bridges over and hops down back on mossy stone, who now looks at him with a hint of being impressed, along with the teeth of iron bars when he enters the portal room.

Lava below the frames seethes in expectation, and Dream satisfies them with his layout of rightfully-earned eyes. It roars with such thunder that it humbles his bones no matter how many times he's in its presence, and its gaping hungrily for someone to help it.

After cleaning his inventory, he dives into the desperate void.

The obsidian hits his feet, the same size as it is always. He spawns a long distance away from the mainland, and in the far render, pillars of the same material tower over in condescension. Not to mention, their queen soars over with a deafening howl, hissing her purple anger all the same with the air-shattering beat of her wings.

Dream pulls out his cobble with a determination in his eyes. A voiding his eyes from the onlooking endermen, he starts to bridge over from the platforms edge.

That is, if he didn't freeze from a snatch at his neck and a grip to his heart.

He slowly looks up, his hand trembling as it comes up to eventually confirm that he's been caught by a hook. Turning his head, his eyes trail across the line—all the way to see George sit a smug grin on his face, the bastard, holding a fishing rod.

"No—don't you dare pull that on me," Dream says with a fearful smile.

"Why?" George cackles like a show-off, "You're dead, Dream~"

"C'mon, lemme go."

But dramatically, George gets ready to yank it and completely fuck him over. Dream's mind races in all the things that George wants most, so of course, what better opportunity to use it?

"I'll—I'll show you my face," Dream says.

George halts his hands, momentarily frowning, and starts to chuckle bitterly—most of it in disbelief, "What? No, you won't."

"I will—I promise. Just let me go, and I'll show you my face."

George begrudgingly bites his lip in consideration and a maddening betrayal. He can't help it.

"You play so dirty, you know that, right?"

Dream gets taken aback by the assertion, "Wh—I let you go for an 'I love you,'" George, c'mon, it's only fair."

A pause, but George finally succumbs to his desires and deselects his fishing rod.

"You better keep that promise," he says.

"I will."

"Snapchat?"

"Sure."

With that, George pierces his tired eyes into Dream before he plummets backwards, like a ragdoll, to the End's void, and the message in chat is enough to give Dream his breath back.

And so, he continues bridging.

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When the final cry of the Ender Dragon crumbles her sorrows, Dream sits on the bedrock, indifferent to its flashes and the rain of experience that washes over his feet. The void that was hungry is now satisfied by his fulfillment and takes him eagerly to spawn, where George waits.

"Well?" He says.

"Okay! Okay, I'm going."

His player momentarily freezes and dims—a sign of disconnect—and so does George's, who hears the speaker buzz with its usual intake of Dream shuffling through his things from the microphone, which is probably still chewed-up. Next, he hears a notification illuminate beside him. He tries not to grab it so eagerly, but who can help it?

"Well... Am I cute?" Dream teases as George swipes the image open.

"You never answered if you thought *I* was cute."

"You're short."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Nothin'."

"Then, you're... decent looking."

"Sure, I'll just believe you aren't swooning in your gamer chair."

"Shut up, you're so annoying."

And Dream laughs, part by his win and part by his answer.

## Chapter 6

### Chapter Notes

oh my god i was writing this while the mutant vid came out and i was like. ok. we gotta Turn This Dialogue to the MAX

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The desert in the day is desolate, sand lazily grasping at George's feet. It is the one time George dislikes the sun, who literally looks down on him, and he has a feeling that part of it is from condescension. The indifferent air naturally prickles his skin, and he wishes that they'd have some consideration for him—he's running for his life, here.

Only thing is, Dream is long gone, possibly from the lack of food—maybe off somewhere getting supplies, maybe off somewhere planning ahead. George hates it either way.

He continues scanning until a desert temple appears in his line of sight, and thankfully, it comes to him without too much hesitation. He hums at its presence in delight.

"What?" Dream says, observing his interest.

"Nothing."

Dream scoffs a playful sarcasm, "Yeah, okay."

"What am I meant to do? *Tell* you?" George retorts.

"...It'd be nice."

George rolls his eyes, "No, what's wrong with you?"

He resumes his attention back to the temple. It stands itself rigidly and he looks at it with potential. The sand under his feet soon turns to the hard sandstone as he climbs into its center, greeting the familiar contrast of terracotta in their eternally identical patterns. It gives him relief from its cool shadows. Breaking one of the corners, he lands down to the pit of sand and breaks its pressure plate. After gathering its heart of dynamite, he checks the chests, but it only gives him a bland response of two pieces of iron, some string, bones, and some gunpowder. He hums in misery.

This time, Dream does not comment on it.

Upon exiting the desert temple, George revisits the ground and its less appreciated acquaintance, the dry air pierced by the overhanging sun, which is a shame because its overwhelming stage of the sky outdoes the brightness that any lava pools might show themselves with. Regardless, he keeps running for one. There is bound to be at least *something* in a desert.

He drives a kick to his step—not worrying about making any tracks, because that is for a *detective* to define—as he more or less wanders with a purpose, and quite rather strangely, an outline of cobble and dark oak shows itself in his render distance. When he continues walking further, he is seared with the determined metal of an arrow from a pillager's crossbow, and realizes he should start fleeing.

Nothing very promising comes out of trying to steal a pillager outpost's loot, what with all its measly carrots and wheat and enchanted books that he and Dream both know they will not use.

But it *does* give him an idea.

Sprinting around with a watchful eye, George collects a very questionable amount of sugar cane, and maybe even some cacti just for fun. Perhaps he should appreciate the desert more.

"Ooh," Dream starts to say, "Oh, you went to this temple, didn't you?"

"What temple?" George says.

"You're such a liar, yes you did."

"I didn't even lie about anything I just said 'What temple?'"

"You know what I mean."

"I actually don't?"

"Well, whatever, okay? You're dead."

George laughs, unsettled and undenying of those words, but ultimately makes no other comment.

Finally, though, the sun gives him its mercy, preferring to sink down for its regular schedule and turning to its eternal partner, the moon. As the light ebbs away, he hops along to coldly greet its fans—the waking mobs.

Particularly, he gifts himself with the haphazard fights of multiple creepers' gunpowder, and with the night finally showing itself, he spots the brightness of a lava pool sitting on the border of a desert and a forest. A bucket of water manifests itself into George's hands very willingly.

George was taken aback on how much simpler and much faster the other portal method proves to be, albeit Dream wasn't the one to teach him specifically—he just sat and observed, occasionally bothering the poor student he was guiding. All in all, at least they both know now, and in hindsight, it's probably that George was too shy in asking Dream to teach him alone, the coward.

The sand makes way to grass, and the glowing pond of lava bubbles at him. Trusting his newly found skills, he scans the edges for a line of four source blocks of lava. Like so, it comes to him easily, and within those four blocks, he places dirt in one of the middle two with water fulfilling its half. Breaking the dirt, he goes on to forming the pair of tetris-like shapes, and puts his water on the corner of the taller one. The rest is just filling in the blanks. The empty portal appreciates his craftsmanship.

With a final breath, he clicks his flint and steel onto the bold obsidian, and its hollow faces him with a bright and ghostly caterwaul. The unearthly purple—or perhaps to him they are blue—cries never fail to unsettle him, but he always gets used to it afterwards. Letting the particles urge him in, he takes a step over the its foundation.

Immediately, the feverish heat seizes his skin, and his eyes meet the seething air that writhes in agony. The terrain hazes grey, splattered by the wandering inhabitants of magma cubes and their respective blocks. Pale flakes fall from the ceiling, and he shakes them off in annoyance. He does note that they are a pretty detail, though.

It's a Basalt Delta biome, and he spawns right at its edge—on the right, a vast sea of anguished

boil. There is only one way to go, which gives George a slight gnaw of irritation, but he can't do anything about it.

Dream takes note of his advancement, "Ugh, you're there already?"

"Yeah~ you got to hurry up, Dream."

No response.

George continues through the ash, hopping along the stalactites of blackstone and basalt, especially careful not to miss a step. He and Dream both remember their first times traversing its uneven terrain, specifically how upset Dream became upon being knocked into the pits of lava by no other than George himself. It was a rather... interesting day, to say the least.

His feet reconcile with the familiar texture of netherrack, and so he carries on. Nothing much here.

"Oh—what? A pillager outpost? Those are rare," Dream says.

Suddenly aware of his opponent's presence, George replies, "You could say that."

Dream continues to observe, "I see you've built your portal like I do."

"Might as well learn."

He laughs, "Didn't help when you kept sabotaging twomad's."

"I was having *fun*," George justifies playfully.

Dream breathily laughs—a relief to the poor man's lungs that it is not a wheeze—and George has a feeling he's rolling his eyes.

George continues sprinting through the mottled ground, eyes turning to the peculiar foundation of blackstone making up the hollow of a different portal—a *ruined* one. He eyes at its potential as he scales his way toward it. Upon opening its chest, he gives a sinister smile.

Some gold boots, a fire charge, and some gold ingot. How lucky. George determines he is a show-off.

That is, *if* he manages to pull his plan off, because Dream announces his presence in the Nether.

"Oh, George~, " he taunts, "Come out to play! Where are you~?"

"Just leave me alone," George laughs in response.

"Oooh," Dream continues, "It's *this* biome again."

Seeing as he has little time, a crafting bench is placed a fair distance away from the basalt's cliff so as to not make it look suspicious. With it, George uses his spare iron and wood—on the contingency that he'll probably find more later—to make a crossbow. He pulls out his storage of sugar cane and gunpowder, along with the other materials that he received from both the desert and the portal, and crafts a very specific projectile.

Fireworks.

Scrambling to a corner, George digs into the netherrack and sneaks further into its safe arms. Dream's nametag is far, but it is slowly bouncing closer. Putting the fireworks in his offhand,

George readies his crossbow in a demanding ambition.

"Oh.. there's a crafting table here.. Why're you so quiet, George?" Dream teases.

Not gracing him with a response, he sees Dream stop at it with curiosity with the eyes piercing like those of a snake.

You should note that snakes don't see well, but he fires at the ground following Dream's feet nonetheless.

"Where'd you g—Oh, what!?"

And in a brilliant, lime green explosion, sparkles fly hungrily at him, and they bite with the same determination as their sender. The basalt and netherrack tumbles upward in retaliation, taking Dream by surprise as he struggles backwards.

"Are those *fireworks*, George? What the hell?"

In condescension of his friend's misery, he laughs with a nonchalant triumph. The crossbow fires again, and although this one has a less powerful show, it does its job all the same with a flash to Dream's death as he's pushed off the edge from its sheer force.

"You gotta be kidding me—how did you even think of that? *Fireworks*? Oh my God, what's wrong with you?"

"I'm just celebrating your three million subscribers," George justifies.

"Thanks, I *guess*."

"Wh— you 'guess'? I even made it lime green for you."

"I saw."

"Well, *I* didn't, so you better appreciate it."

Dream scoffs, "Maybe you should've accepted my offer for enchroma glasses."

"You're still up for it?"

"After I kill you."

"Guess not."

Dream laughs, and their conversation ends at that.

George continues through the Nether's anguish, now used to its heat, and with a tiresome hand, he drags his pickaxe behind him, sending his eyes on a journey for the dark contrast of brick.

It comes to him easily, but not the right one. Instead, he comes across a Bastion, which isn't ideal, but he guesses it's something. Its exterior calls to him with a crumble of regrets and sorrow and whatever the hell happened to it in the old days. The golden boots find themselves snug on his feet, feeling at home in the unbearable blister, or at least, more so than his iron boots did. It clunks quieter when he takes a step.

Upon digging directly through the wall, the piglins greet him with a calm neutrality, and he nods to them in return, carefully avoiding the glint of their swords and their crossbows, because that would

be some *serious* karma.

"What?" Dream says suddenly, "'*Those Were The Old Days*'? What's that?"

"Uhhhh.. I dunno."

"Oh, a *bastion*? Why would you go in *there*?"

"No reason."

"Well, I hope you get mauled."

George rolls his eyes and laughs with a breathy irritation.

The heart of the bastion sits cozily in the middle, what with all its chests and blocks of gold warmed by the surrounding barricade of lava. George looks down on it in a sort of awe and concentration. Not keen on having a repetition of a previous time in a bastion, he carefully tears down the floor below him until he reaches a safe distance to fall. Soon, he is in the middle, the loot staring at him with a sense of curiosity just as intense as his, but learning from his mistakes, he will not satisfy theirs.

Instead, he might just let Dream do that.

He does not open them. That would be stupid, especially now when the piglins eye him warily, and he can't blame them. Alternatively, he takes out his TNT, who waits for its unexpected use, and places it a few blocks above the direct center. Finally, a button sits comfortably on the aforementioned explosive. He lays a soft push on it before scrambling away from its harsh response. It hisses, flashing its surprise, and in a great roar, the billows of blackstone chip away at his armor as he takes cover. Slowly turning back, he regards the items idle on the floor in delight, even though he hears some of them fizzle as they fall victim to the lava below. A half-beaten pair of diamond leggings sit for him to take, as well as a relieving twelve blocks of obsidian. The piglins around him do not take notice, preferring to wander around in their home. He is safe from their cautious gazes.

"'Cover me in Diamonds'? You're joking. You didn't even get the ingot first."

George giggles, "The *ingot*?"

"You know what I mean."

George exits the bastion, and continuing on, the correct contrast of brick waits for him on the other side of the netherrack, albeit half buried. The calloused surface soon sears his skin after hopping along its bridge— as they find him too cold for their taste. Seeing the familiar make-up of a Blaze spawner in the open, he sprints towards it. Three make their presence known and he greets them with their mortality just as quick—two rods determine themselves to be his gift.

"Oh George~! I see you in that fortress! Get over here~!"

"You're lying."

However, he's swiftly proven wrong from the advancement that follows his. Looking over the bridge, Dream's sickly silhouette shakes as he cackles, and it sends a humble to George's bones.

"What!? How'd you get here so quickly?"



Dream gives him is a hungry glare, "Oh, you're dead, George. I'm gonna get you~!"

In response, George sends him back a determined look, readying his blade out. Their arena stands desolate.

Save for the one blaze that hits him with a fireball, and soon his skin is screaming with no help at all. Dream wolfs forward with an unhinged smile and a pack mentality that wants him dead, so of course, Dream's previous hope of him getting mauled is taken into his own hands.

"Georgie~ Come here!!!!!"

And he will be, if he doesn't run.

Skidding around corners, the fortress howls at him to flee faster, but George doesn't appreciate it because he can't do anything more than that. The flames on his body cease their anger, but just only so that he's on a few hearts left.

"Just get over here!" Dream hollers, "Let me! Kill you!"

"Dream, get away from me!"

"No way, I'm never gonna leave you alone."

George reaches a dead end, and turning around, the iron of Dream's sword just barely caresses his neck so sickeningly that the sound of it unsheathing alone might as well just kill him. Backed up on an annoyingly indifferent wall of netherrack, Dream pits his blade right next to George's head, and the shriek of it sliding into the hellish rock is so deafeningly loud, it makes him flinch. He smells the power of a golden apple from Dream's breath, and decides he will not win this fight.

"Dream, *please*, just let me go," George begins to plead.

"I'm not letting you run from me."

"Not even for a trade?"

"You have nothing."

"Listen, I'll," he loses his words, "I'll—uh, I'll tell you I love you?"

Dream chuckles, unsettling George even more, "You've already tried that."

He exhumes his weapon out the netherrack, preparing for a final strike.

But George continues quickly, "I'll get you my merch."

Dream's disposition seems to relax in satisfaction, but only out of curiosity.

"You're lying," he sneers, raising his sword up again.

"No—what? I promise, I'll get you a hoodie, a shirt, whatever you want. All of it, even. Each one."

Though, to be fair, George only has about three designs, but he won't talk about it because he might die in the same amount in seconds if he does.

He resumes reasoning, "Why would I lie about that? You got me chocolate raisins, it's only fair if I give you something in return."

Dream heaves a sigh, a little skeptical, but he accepts the offer and throws his sword over his back.

"Fine. You're getting me clout glasses, too."

"Alright. Deal."

That's a lot of fucking money, but so it goes. Dream backs away with an animalistic desire to his disposition, begrudgingly dragging his feet on the hot bricks who stare at their game of cat and mouse in curiosity—whether they will ever be satiated, however, is up for the future to decide. In turn, George cautiously walks forward and locks eyes with him so as to not be caught off guard by possible and very likely betrayal.

They walk to the more open intersection, and Dream lazes on top of its fences, nonchalantly blocking off the many fireballs from the spawner's Blazes before growling at them. Unsurprisingly, they cower away. George stutters his walk, hesitant to do anything, really, and glances fearfully at Dream, whose demeanor is that of cold expectation.

"What're you waiting for?" He says, his voice full of gravel.

Without a word, George goes back to getting the rods. He receives them quite easily, in fact, and moreover, it is courtesy of Dream staring the Blazes down with his temperament. George can see its effects, as they are more quiet than usual—he is Dream's kill, after all, and deep down, he knows that it *has* to be Dream to kill him in order to satisfy his own emotional hunger, the Floridian fucker.

Upon leaving the stairs for the final time, George freezes at the blade that bites the ground right in front of him, narrowly missing his feet.

"Oh, Georgie!! Time's up!!"

So, likewise, George weasels out of the fortress, followed by a ravenous, relentless Dream.

"Just get *over* here, George! Let me kill you!"

"No, leave me alone."

"You already had that chance!"

"Well, let me have another one."

"No way, are you crazy??"

"And *you're* not?"

Dream lets out another heinous cackle.

They bound through the netherrack in a quite literal hot pursuit, and while George hears Dream grunt from being shot by a piglin for his lack of gold, he takes the time to take out his TNT. They make a solid sound while he places them under his feet, hissing as he lights them before continuing to run. It blows up right in Dream's face.

He sighs in such sinister contempt that George can feel his own blood loose their iron, "Oh my *God*, you're so annoying."

Meanwhile, George's feet pound on basalt and blackstone, which is soon to be replaced by a few more blocks of TNT, and upon landing his final jump from its pillars, his flint smashes together.

Dream gasps, and George is desperate.

"No—nonono."

Except there is no death message in the chat to relieve him.

Regardless, George flees to his portal, placing yet another block of TNT in front of the portal. A few seconds before he is taken in, he uses up the last of his flint

And that is the last time he hears the Nether screams from this game of cat and mouse.

The purple wisps wrap its arms and presents him with the cool caress of the Overworld's nightly air. Its moon regards him in solidarity above. After barricading the portal in obsidian, he catches his breath.

"That was... something," he says.

"I hate you so much, George."

"I don't mind."

"Shut up. Ugh, oh my God."

George chuckles internally, rather than externally, for fear that it'll bite back if he does. His feet shift to the sand, scouring the desert for a tall, dark, and handsome man—someone very similar to Dream, but much less frightening to approach. One comes to sight very easily next to the scatters of cacti, and so he makes his way across. Its purple eyes stare at him in anguish, but regardless, George rids all of its feelings swiftly, and in return, he is gifted with one enderpearl.

"You blocked it with *obsidian*?!" Dream says, "You are so annoying."

Seeing as George doesn't have as much time as he thinks, he makes his eye of ender and watches it float up towards his right. It comes back into his hands just as quickly, and likewise, he keeps running.

"Oh, George!!!"

The path opens to a shore, so in turn, George takes a boat and speeds off while glancing around, but alas, nothing. The portal is unbroken and Dream squirms in it, nauseated by its purple cries. He tries his best to ignore Dream's taunts, and water agrees. The sea of sand soon turns into crowds of kelp, who wave their condolences as he runs for his life. He's sick of it.

A ravine rips apart the ocean ground, with some light emitting from its core. Releasing the eye again, it drowns into the water's hold, and so he takes his boat with him to save it.

That is, he would have, if an arrow hadn't sunk it already.

He looks up to see Dream's silhouette accompanying a dolphin interrupt their blue surroundings, and the shock of it deafens him.

"What!? How'd you get here so quick?!"

All Dream does is giggle like a hyena, and so their game of cat and mouse turns into that of shark and minnow.

"Dream, leave me alone. Please."

"No, c'mere~! You're gonna die! Just *die*, already!"

"Oh my God, stop. You're an *animal*."

"I can't argue with that."

But what Dream can argue with is a trident, and likewise, the sight of it terrifies George.

"Wh—you have a—"

And before he can finish, his head is forked with the bite of three cruel claws and the breath of him is knocked out by his back hitting the soft and sickeningly saccharine grass of a plains biome. A death message in the chat looks at him in betrayal—so does the moon, but at least *she* can understand. He sighs in irritation while Dream's laugh of triumph is a sting to his ears.

"That," he begins, "is literally so unfair."

"What?? I just had some luck."

"Yeah, you happened to be the five percent of drops from the drowned. How's that for luck?"

"I did grind for it, you know," Dream shrugs, "while I was gone."

"You—oh my God. I was so close."

"You would've won if I didn't plan ahead, but because I knew we were gonna be in the water, well, because you're annoying when it comes to boats, I hid my bed and I had stuff in a chest."

"... Quit planning ahead, then."

Dream laughs, "You're such an idiot."

A death message from Dream pops up playfully, and George feels the ground recoil at his presence. The sound of grass crunching approaches him, and it stops when Dream sits down.

"You know that time you caught up to me because you MLG cobwebbed?" He starts softly.

"I think so, I dunno," George replies.

"It was a pretty good strategy."

"Thanks. Your TNT strat worked pretty good, too."

"That's why I carried flint and steel."

George huffs a breath in acknowledgement, "I hate you so much."

And Dream chuckles, for the first time in a while, with fondness.

## Chapter End Notes

these strats are so unrealistic but it was very fun to write.

## Chapter 7

### Chapter Summary

slime block strats

### Chapter Notes

i had SO MUCH trouble writing this one idk why but. e n j o y

The swamp is not kind enough to Dream despite them sharing green natures. Her crowd of lily pads snicker at him as they are too inconveniently placed for his leisure, and so are the vines that grasp at his body with the intent to end it. Small pools of water, especially the ones who take up but one block, threaten to latch onto his feet.

Ultimately, she makes it clear that she is not a biome to be clumsy in—a warning to his risky character, for it will cost him his life if he's too slow.

"Oh, Dream~" George taunts, "How's that hoodie doing?"

Dream gives a more or less nonchalant reply, "It's... doing fine."

"Are you wearing it?"

"Maybe."

"Is it comfy?"

"I'd say so."

"Good."

This is not their usual daily banter, but Dream does not let that fool him into thinking he is safe, because George is a man full of affectation, and the task of fully mastering its identification proves to be difficult. He sends a watchful eye around, careful to peer between the swamp's meticulous mazes.

Nothing. George is not found.

What *is* found, however, are the lethargic squelches of a big green fellow, or rather, a couple of them—not at all like Dream himself, with the exception of being green. They bounce curiously at him, but he is indifferent, preferring to let his iron sword make a satisfactory journey through their flesh. In turn, his cruelty is rewarded with a multitude of slime balls. It would be a crime not to save them for later use, because Dream makes a slime block out of them.

The swamp eventually dies down to a shore, and more prominently, to the arms of an ocean. Unlike the vines, she accepts him warmly and cradles him in her currents. She has always been an

excellent assistant to their game of cat and mouse, though Dream doesn't always appreciate it when it is George she's helping.

Then again, he attests that George needs her help more than Dream himself. However, no matter how much George begs for the ocean's mercy and receives it, Dream always manages to conclude that it is all in vain.

That is, at least so far.

He continues through the curious hands of kelp—at least *they*, of all plants, do not get in his way, and even give themselves the opportunity to be eaten, even though it is not much to gain from. He would be a dead man starving if he were to find himself eating its dried counterpart.

The dark and uplifting silhouette of a shipwreck lies sleepily at the edge of Dream's render distance. Deciding to awaken it, he dives through its innards and guts it from its supply of minerals, hoping it doesn't mind, because it shouldn't. A decent handful of iron—five ingots, in fact—present themselves readily to him, along with a couple emeralds and a few pieces of gold. With the last few bubbles of air, he pulls himself up to the surface.

Saccharine lines George's voice when he says, "Oh, Dream~"

"What?"

"Dream! I see you~"

"You're lying— you're not even here."

George can only reply with an annoying giggle. He's terrible at lying, and also not. It's always been like that.

Dream takes control over the currents once again, along with the help of a dolphin. It squeaks its condolences as he swims for his life. The waves of kelp and sea grass wave him an indifferent goodbye, but the sea is accepting of her recurring loneliness as he crashes to a shore with a mouthful of sand, reminding him why he hates the beach. Trudging up, branches of acacia trees greet him before the rest of the savanna does.

More interestingly, a lava pool abandons its shyness as it sits squarely on the bed of dry grass. It goes to show when some of it lights on fire. So, taking a souvenir from the shore, Dream drags his bucket of water and hopes it will suffice as a satisfaction to the lava's bubbles.

Like always, the fortification of the portal fares just fine, and the pond of bright lessens, forced to face some humility as part of its body turns rigid to water. Dream clinks his flint and steel against the newly born obsidian, and it responds with a ghostly, yet expected cry. It washes over him like an old friend, and deciding he'll take its hand, he reaches to be engulfed by its familiar heat.

What is *also* familiar, however, is the shit-eating ambition of George snaking towards him through the savanna's body with an equally ambitious diamond sword who he holds dearly, especially since it wears the color he adores the most.

"Dream!! Come here!"

So, instead of simply taking the portal's hand, Dream throws himself into its face of violent violet. The Nether mercies him graciously with a fortress near spawn, and he thanks its convenience, but does not have time to appreciate it in full, because not long after, George slithers his way over the netherrack.

And so their natural game of cat and mouse resumes.

Streams of lava fall from the ceiling to celebrate their arrival, but only because they are excited for something to eat, and Dream takes it notably to dodge their bright hands spreading over the ground, praying for his downfall.

The bold foundation of brick shows itself more clearly now across a gape of lava. It is not close enough to make a clean jump, so Dream fulfills his previous killing's purpose when he places a sickly green substance below his feet just as he hits the wall, who sends him up to tumble on the bridge's surface.

George, surprised by this development, goes, "You—what!? An MLG slimeblock?!"

And he attempts to do the same, but Dream, sucking in a concentrated breath, slides out his sword and the last thing George can see is a blade of white.

"No—! Oh my God—"

Well, not exactly, though he dies nonetheless— not from the hungry lava lakes, but from a block clutch placed too low. Thus, he greets his mortality from fall damage, and Dream laughs.

"You're joking," George mutters, "Like, that's so unfair."

Dream continues chuckling, "That's totally fair!"

"A slimeblock? Where'd you even get one??"

"The swamp, idiot."

And Dream can feel George roll his eyes when he huffs in annoyance as he concludes which biome is his least favorite, besides birch or jungle, of course.

Turning back to continue through the fortress, his boots sound out a ripple of metal each time he takes a step, even though the rest of the structure stays silent, possibly in fear of his prowess. Dream determines that this may be the reason why he doesn't hear any Blazes yet, but is still wary of any idle crackle of rotten bones in case any wither skeletons come up to scare him.

He treads along the stretch, listening closely for any familiar cries, but he mostly gets a lullaby from the casual Ghast's whimper as a response. It feels strange—lonely even. It is not always like this. In fact, being lonely is the goal in the Nether.

But a voice pulls him out of the feeling, "...Dream?"

"What?"

"You're so quiet?"

"Well, yeah. What about it?"

"You're planning something."

Dream chuckles, because in all honesty, he would be, but he doesn't know why he hasn't.

"No, I'm not," he says.

"You're lying—yes, you are."

"I'm not; I *promise*."

George's reply is an unconvinced hum, which Dream then ignores.

His loneliness is relinquished as he nears an intersection, the hostile and recognizable verbatim of nether fences and nether bricks showing themselves carelessly. Dragging his sword out, Dream proves that he is accustomed to the regular routine of posing a threat to the Nether's pride and treasure—its Blaze rods.

They come to him easily—all seven, in fact. His skin sears here and there, but it is nothing to worry about, for the most part. The fortress no longer boils at his presence, preferring to let him be. As he traces his steps, he stares at how the blaze rods' glow spreads a kaleidoscope of patterns across the floor. It is quite an interesting detail. Upon reaching the edge, he discovers that there are more blocks than he remembers leaving.

"You came back for your things," he says.

"What? No, I didn't."

"Your cobble is literally right here, George."

"Listen, my diamond sword was still alive."

"Ugh, you're so annoying."

George laughs, and Dream bridges over back to the natural formation of netherrack, remembering to dodge the grasping streams of lava from the ceiling. The friendly purple countenance waves its wisps in reconciliation, and he, as courtesy, reciprocates. Unlike last time, the portal hugs him calmly over to the Overworld, and he expects the trade to be an equally calm wash of temperate air.

However, he does not feel any different. If anything, it is even hotter, and it sears his body in a godforsaken smolder as it seems that George has poured a bucket of lava over him.

"What!? The *hell*?"

Dream pushes past the wall of heat with his skin now sending his brain a blistering caterwaul.

George's sickening giggles ring his ears as he tries running away, "Dream! C'mere!"

"Leave me alone!" He shouts, this time with a genuine panic.

George pulls out a diamond sword, whose hunger is filled with revenge, especially because Dream had nearly made George abandon it, and they resume their game strangely so that Dream has retained his role as the mouse.

"C'mon, Dream, get over here—how're you not dead?!"

"George, *please*."

George's maniacal blade sweeps at his ankles, so he falls and decides that sweeping damage is the shittiest feature to swords yet. He turns over to meet George's repulsive silhouette and the equally dreadful caress of pain at his neck, held at a claustrophobic mercy that exists only to prolong Dream's feeling of an intoxicating asphyxia.

"Lemme—Lemme go," he stutters, "George, come *on*. Let me be."



George's loathly expression does not budge except for the harsh lift and flow of his breathing. Dream's too.

"*Please*," he continues.

"When did 'please' ever get you anything?"

So Dream decides they'll have to play at trades again, "You want something?"

And George decides he'll cut him some slack, even though he presses the sharp of his sword down a little harder, "Try it."

"Uhhh...Plane ticket..." Dream grins sheepishly, "To my house?"

The sound of a particular mineral on grass makes him flinch as it shovels itself on the ground in a strong reconsideration.

"You're serious, this time?" George begins softly, yet holding a slight sour undertone.

"I'm serious."

He scoffs, "No, you're not."

"Yes," Dream reassures, for some reason taken aback at George's recoil, "I am."

Well, he was going to fly him out, anyways.

"You're paying for it?" George asks.

"I already gave you eleven thousand dollars, but yeah."

George laughs bitterly, and the clang of the sword on the ground satisfies the both of them, "Get out of here. You have until the stronghold."

In turn, Dream pulls himself up in search of a tall, dark, and handsome man, now seeing the similarities manifesting in George, who watches after him with a demanding ambition—an abandoned self-preservation instead of an abandoned sword. The savanna's grass allows Dream through smoothly, for fear of his life at stake, but the lackluster taste of bread saves their worries.

At least, just for now.

Soon, George lets the sea take him away, presumably to recover the armor he lost, and Dream's nerves find themselves relieved.

As he treads along, the overzealous orange of a savanna village greets him on his scour for an enderpearl. Its villagers look at him warmly, unknowing of the predicament he is in. Regardless, he accepts their blissful ignorance invitingly—it is not like *they* can do anything about it.

It takes him an impatient amount of chopping wood, but he gets a sufficient eight pearls and a stack of arrows. The cleric and the fletcher nod their heads happily at his business, and Dream reciprocates. Subsequently, the wilderness of the savanna takes him into its arms again, now losing its purpose as Dream lifts the first Eye to watch it float to his diagonal right.

"Are you there yet?" George jokes.

"Shut up, no."

"You're terrible, Dream."

"I bet you haven't even gotten all your armor back yet."

"That's ridiculous, Dream. I've been sitting here for ten minutes."

"*Sure*, you have."

"Yeah."

"Ok, fine. Come fight me right now."

"Uhh.." George loses his words, "No thanks."

"That's what I thought."

George's silence makes Dream laugh internally. The savanna cools, or rather, it is the sky that ceases its relentless heat. However, none of it can come close to the Nether's levels and both of them know it for a fact. The sun throws itself away, allowing the moon to follow in a slow pursuit—much like a game of cat and mouse, though the arena of the sky is calmer and happens eternally for a natural reason. *Theirs*, however, comes as a question that neither of them have truly pinned down. Sure, it is fun, but deep down, it is out of their respective need to fulfill their emotional hunger and the satisfaction of proving their abilities.

But especially so their innate, and at the same time inhuman, desire to hunt down one another specifically, and they both obsessively cling to these feelings. All of them.

Dream continues, now as it dims, through the long savanna, and its plateaus now looking down on him for having these feelings—the love of both hunting and being hunted. He has to admit, it does scare him as equally as it does George.

Well, he takes that back, actually—in reality, it probably scares George the most, but he is the only one who can survive it, and that's why they live like this. One should note that it *does* make Dream a little sad that George doesn't reciprocate the act as much as he likes, but he trusts they'll improve.

The terrain becomes more tolerable as it opens to a regular birch forest—their familiar scars smile at him, and he remembers why birch is his favorite. Lilacs and poppies wave their petals in curiosity, but ultimately decide to keep out of his business, for it would cost them their lives. The next eye he throws sinks comfortably into the grass. For some reason, strongholds tend to frequent birch forests—or at least to Dream it does—but it just gives him another reason to like birch more.

With a shovel, he digs straight down—a sin he's been accustomed to—and after forty-some blocks, the hardness of stone brick and the smell of ancient moss consumes him.

"Oh, finally," George says.

"Shut up. Why aren't *you* here yet, then?"

"Because if I kill you now, you won't actually buy the ticket."

Dream rolls his eyes, "I said I promised."

"Alright, you want me to fight you now?"

Dream stays silent at this, though usually, he wouldn't. It's not that he can't take George on, but rather that he doesn't want to risk the fight—contradictory to his character—especially now that

he's at the stronghold with nothing to help him.

The robust walls hush their gossip as Dream traverses through, as well as the whispers of the library's various books. He mentally spits on them as his feet get caught in its cobwebs, concluding that the Nether may be risky, but the stronghold, of all places, certainly is the most annoying.

And it is especially when George's advancement follows through.

"Oh, Dream~ Where are you? Come out to play~!"

But Dream can only scoff, "You're 'come out to play'-ing me?"

"It doesn't work on you, but I see why you do it."

"Do you?"

"It's fun, but only when you're scared."

Dream laughs, because he's rarely scared. Just uneasy.

Going through a few intersections, he manages to get four pearls—the exact amount he needs. How lucky.

The teeth of the portal room's iron bars finally show themselves, along with the little squeaks of the frames' tiny, pestering guards. He tears through their spawner and kills the remaining ones just as quickly—the last thing he needs is for them to stall George time.

With a tired hand, he brittles the rest of the pearls with its powdery counterpart, and so the ancient portal cries out at its ghostly rebirth—a chill runs up Dream's spine like always, but whether it is out of fear or power is up for him to decide and he is someone who can juggle both.

"Ugh, you're there already?" George says.

"You better hurry up."

And so, Dream lets the void swallow him whole with no thoughts to grace about its infinite twinkles of turquoise—that is for George to admire, even though it won't be the right colors.

The sickly pale endstone spiders around him, but the only sound he can hear is the resentment from their queen. His boots clank on cold obsidian, which is unusual to him because he is most familiar with it being lukewarm, but regardless, his head pops up from the ground trying to avoid the small talk of passing endermen.

They, of all people, are not to be stared at. Even a blind man knows that.

Taking out his bow in concentrated breath, he pulls back an arrow at the first pillar of obsidian. In a magnificent kaleidoscope of smoke, an explosion confirms his accuracy.

Now for the other nine.

The crystals eye him down in contempt, but nonetheless, he finishes three more of them off before George announces his presence.

"Hello, Dream~"

Dream sees him crawl out of the hole he made, but he is not fast enough to stop himself from

feeling the sickly and loving stroke of a sharp blade across his face, and so he hisses a grimace.

He probably should've killed him.

Their swords ring around on the pallid ground with endermen staring at their child's play like a school fight—interested, but horrified and unintending to interrupt. Their ruler, however, thinks differently, though it is not that she wants to stop them, but rather that she wants to kill them both, or more specifically, the one that plans to kill *her*.

Both Dream and George fly in opposite directions, and both land their waters to soften their fall.

"Leave me alone, George."

George smiles, "Why would I do that?"

Of course, they are only empty words—all of them are, at this point. No matter what, the dragon is yet to be killed, and so is Dream, who takes another shot at the end crystals, and soon sounds another detonation and the brilliant trickle of sparks flying, along with the anguished cry of its authority.

Dream is once again sent into the arms of the black sky, and upon plummeting, he pulls out the safe haven of his water bucket.

And he would've been fine, except for the arrow that manages to dig its teeth into his side, rendering his landing quite the unfriendly and disorienting one. As a result, there is a simultaneous roar of triumph and loss.

"What!? No—hold on—," Dream appears to still be processing as he lies on the arrogant grass of a plains biome, "That is so unfair."

George mimics Dream's previous words, though with a slight laugh, "That is totally fair. It was an *arrow*."

"I missed my MLG water..."

"Because of me. And you died. And I win."

"Shut up."

"I'll do that when you fly me over."

"Good."

-

When George arrives at Dream's house, he immediately collapses on the couch, luggage standing rigid beside him. They are both tired, though George more so, and it is seven in the morning.

"You better keep up the sleep schedule, because we're working during the day," Dream says.

George turns to him, a smug smile tagged on his face, "Why's that?"

Dream gives him an irritated squint, "What do you think is gonna happen when people hear us screaming at three in the morning?"

George laughs before passing out, and Dream's loneliness is relinquished.



## Chapter 8

### Chapter Notes

idk why it took me so long to get this chapter out but E n j o y. I had to test out the mlg sweet berry for this one on an actual mc world AHAAA. i hope dt finds it useful.

Stars look down on George, who has grown accustomed to the spruce leaves caressing his face while speeding through its branches. He uses his spare cobble to block his path—an annoyance to Dream, just seconds away from ending his life with one lone punch.

"C'mere!" Dream cackles, voice full of greed.

And George pulls his jaw so tight, it might break his teeth. The sweet berries radiate their sympathies to him, and in appreciation, George swiftly grabs them along, hoping they'll be useful in fulfilling his own hunger instead of Dream's. Foxes scatter around at their presence, resuming to their gossip when they pass.

Judging that George has enough space, he begins to tower in a large clearance with his planks, Dream just narrowly missing his feet.

"No!" Dream says, distraught.

George mellows the tension in his body, and places a furnace below his feet to finish off the silhouette. Putting his mutton in to cook, he filters out a concentrated and tired hiss.

"Let me away, Dream," George chuckles fearfully, "*Please*."

Dream responds with a chuckle of his own, though instead of having a bitter taste to it, it is maniacal, "No, what? Are you crazy? Why would I leave you alone?"

George uneasily mocks over the warmth of his smelting food, "Am *I* crazy?"

"Well, yeah, I'm supposed to hunt you, you idiot."

"Gimme a chance."

"You didn't give me any when you first hunted me."

George laughs sheepishly at that, but he is not guilty—he is not the type of person to be, and will probably never be, despite whatever the truth holds.

They sit in a heated silence until Dream comments, "How're you gonna get down from there, George? Neither of us have water buckets."

"Uhhh.. I don't know," George lies, "Shit."

Dream laughs, pulling a bow out, "You're dead, George."

And the vicious bite of an arrow just barely kisses the strands of his hair, and if he flinched an inch more, he would've fallen from imbalance. Another arrow comes just as close to grabbing his hip, so

George blocks himself in with cobble, hearing another thud come close to his ear, along with an exasperated sigh. Dream is out of arrows.

"Ugh, you're so annoying. Stay there," he says, slithering off.

"Where else do you think I'm gonna *go*?" George retorts.

"You'd jump off and die," Dream jokes.

"That's ridiculous, Dream."

"*You're* ridiculous, that's why."

"*I'm* ridiculous? You're the crazy one!"

"Yeah, but you like that, don't you?"

"No."

"Liar."

George huffs out a breath of simultaneous annoyance and amusement, unwilling to deny or confirm it. His furnace mellows its fire, determining itself finished with its job, and so George swipes it back up in his inventory just as quickly. Peering over his fort, he scours for Dream's familiar figure through the crowd of trees whose rustle of leaves are entertained by their game of cat and mouse.

However, no bright yellow stands out to him as it should, and he concludes that he is temporarily safe, possibly foolishly and possibly not. Regardless, he takes his handful of sweet berries and jumps down, planting it before he lands to soften his fall. Skittering away, he bites desperately at his charred lamb chop and feels his hearts fill. The bright smile of a dry ravine piques his interest, and upon arriving at its edge, stone tumbles down to its softer friend, dirt. No water, but a plentiful amount of iron.

An "Oh, Geor..gie.." sends a chill up his spine.

He replies uneasily, "...what?"

"Come down here—where are you?"

"Uh... no where."

"You're *gone*? You *left me*?"

"No, that'd be silly."

"You *did*! Where'd you go, you little..."

And out of the corner of George's eye, the faint silhouette of Dream's body finally shows itself wolfing towards him, gaping a smile much like the ravine's.

"There you are," toxin drips viciously from his mouth.

George, gasping, tries to slow him down by catching his feet with fruit, but, in fact, it proves to be fruitless because the power of knockback is not to be messed with, and so he pummels down the chasm.

Ideally, to Dream, he would die from fall damage, but with the few berries he has left, he crashes in a shrub on a patch of dirt, relieving his heart and taking Dream's by surprise. It goes to show when his laughing stops and George can feel his leering grin drop to a stupefied scowl.

"You lived!?" He says.

George giggles, a little dumbly, "I may have fallen for you, but I've MLG-sweet-berried in your DMs."

"Oh my God..." Dream seems to be throwing his head back in an exasperated roll of the eyes, chuckling out of disbelief, "That's so stupid.... MLG-sweetberry??? That's a thing?"

"I mean, I lived."

"I hate you so much, George."

"Good."

"No, not good."

"What? You want to love me?"

"No."

"Liar."

Dream ends the conversation unanswered, unwilling to confirm or deny George's statement, of whom hides his smug smile as he continues through the walls of stone. Their rigid silence is a sign of sympathy, or maybe even in mourning—if George were more prideful, he'd mentally retort, but since he understands the pity they have for him, he decides to leave them be.

*Dream*, of all people, is hunting him, after all.

The dark ripples of sounds that echo each time he steps is ironically a safe haven for him. If he listens carefully, it will show him that he is alone, and he is, for the most part, though whether or not he truly prefers it to be that way is a mystery to him as well. The lips of the ravine remain unscathed, as far as he can tell. Delving further into the hollow of stone, he finds plentiful iron, along with branches into the ground's cave system.

His iron sword, iron pick, and bucket each find themselves a comfortable, if not permanent, habitat in his hotbar. After he collects a handful of gravel, so does a flint and steel.

And just in time, too, because he hears the vivacious movement of Dream scaling down to his level, and it should be reiterated that the mere suggestion of his unhinged smile is enough to send George's body into a state of rigor mortis.

"Oh, Georgie~!!" Dream barks, and George regrets being a cat person.

His pivot is calculated as he flees to one of the ravine's many internal veins, dodging the many curious limbs of spiders and zombies, as well as a few blindly hostile arrows.

In the distance, three creepers idly gossip until they spot him, and at the same time, the teeth of Dream's equally maniacal sword bite at George's back, pushing him towards them uncomfortably closer. So, flicking out his flint and steel, he forces the creepers alight.

Behind him, three consecutive clicks followed by three consecutive hisses—



"What—No! Nonono—"

Followed by three consecutive explosions and four deaths, one of which is thankfully not George, who shakes the debris off his body.

"Oh my God," they both say, to which Dream then goes, "I hate you."

And George somehow laughs in both relief and anxiety, but not because anything is funny—he's just hiding his fear, and Dream knows it.

He lets the caves engulf him more, as it appears it runs deeper than he initially thought. Its hollows howl him a warning; miscellaneous minecarts creak in abandon, unlike Dream, who tends to come at him with the reckless type. Bats squeak at him in curiosity, but unfortunately for them, George does not plan on indulging them in case they snitch.

His supply of iron becomes sufficient as he travels further, and upon doing so, he hears the light bubble of undisturbed y-11 lava. A stream of water from above spreads over a nice square of obsidian, and so, easily finding a line of four source blocks, the rest is memorization. The click of flint and steel sends the initially quiet gate up in a distressed wail, and with a nervous check of any watchful eyes behind him, he lets the violet face take him in.

"Ugh—already?" Dream says.

But instead of replying, George listens to the occasional nursery rhyme of a Ghast ghost his ear, along with the sorrowful soul soil singing under his feet. It is accompanied with a red wall of its more familiar friend, netherrack, though he does have a hard time identifying the contrast between the two. He decides to ignore them, hopping along the surface with his cobble.

"Oh, Georgie..."

"What?"

"Where's your portal? You went all the way down to y-11 didn't you?"

"You don't have to worry about that."

Dream laughs bitterly at the fruitless lie as George weaves through the once-idle rattle of bones and indifferent blue fire. The similarly-colored haze is equally shy of showing its interest in helping him, but George supposes it is only natural. The ground below him sifts, lapping at his cobble like ocean waves, animated in a way that it seems as though it wants to eat him. It is unsettlingly alive, to say the least. As he continues, the unsightly distress of fossils poking out of the landscape stand themselves up, and until now, George has never thought of where they come from, and he probably won't for the remainder of their game—he just hopes he doesn't join them.

Escaping afterlife is just one aspect of everything.

The valley hums a dull drone, and upon constant running appears the motionless sleep of a grieving fortress. Unfortunately, George will have to be the one to disturb its slumber in its home of unrestful heat. He bridges over to it, bricks unwelcoming, as well as the announcement of Dream's presence to the same dimension.

"Oh, George! Come here—I missed you~"

*Already—?* "Oh my God, no..."

The sad ballads of a Blaze receives him soundly, but since George prefers it quiet, its cries are cut short. A spawner calls to him when it drops its rod.

It does not take him long since they've proven themselves to be implicit over their last manhunts, but just as he obtains an seventh, the ground shudders at Dream's rabid and endearing desire.

"You're dead, George," Dream just barely growls, "Where are you?"

Like a raccoon upon being discovered, George peers around as he scampers around silent brick corners with a heavy heart, building upwards to an overhang and sneaking so as to prevent his name from being seen. The crackle of blue fire laughs at him, and if he had time, he'd put them out from pettiness. Below him, Dream's demeanor edges closer to that of an animal with bared teeth than to that of a human—rapaciousness unmatched in anything George has ever seen.

The fortress wishes him a soft goodbye, and he reciprocates with a quiet scale onto an equally soft soul soil. He gains closer ground toward the rigidity of obsidian, and so, he scrambles around all the netherrack he can get and boxes himself in within it. Although his craftsmanship is that of a two-year-old's, he hopes it's enough.

Hearing the violet scowl of the portal whispering him worried sympathies, he lets the particles urge him outwards their lonely realm—they repeatedly tell him that he simply just does not belong here, and he agrees.

"Uh oh, there's a... guy here," he hears Dream mutter, presumably about the dark and handsome, but not tall, per se, wanderings of a wither skeleton.

A less hateful breath of air washes over him when he returns to the Overworld, though it still holds some bitterness. Iron and gold ore eye him in shock that he even lives, but he doesn't focus on it all too much. Travelling back to the upper levels of the cave, he finds an enderman who sits idly, picking at a stone block. He kills it swiftly and grabs its pearl.

"You must've gone to this Blaze spawner—did you leave already? There's no way you got all of them," Dream says.

"No, that'd be silly, Dream."

"Ugh, you're such a weasel."

George giggles. He finds the entrance of the ravine and towers up, and upon reaching the surface, the cool spruce forest hushes at his presence. In response, the Blaze rods hiss at the exposure of this new temperature, but he brittles them soon enough, and their collaboration with his lone pearl is satisfied.

The eye trails its particles ahead of him, determined to find its way back home, and so he continues to follow it. Spruce trees turn rigid, colder as he walks further, and soon the pitiful crunch of snow flattens under his feet. Pools of slush eye him, skeptic of his survival. He just hopes the temperature will wear Dream down.

A peak of snow, or rather, the round of it, catches his attention—an igloo. Eyes widening in a delighted surprise, he sprints after it and finds the two inhabitants sitting idly, a block apart because... well... lore never explained why.

They look at him expectantly, and so the process begins with a splash potion of weakness. George stares at the golden apple, however, wishing he could take it for himself, but he knows it's for the benefit of a longer run. The zombified villager grunts its appreciation, although whether it is

voluntary or subconscious is unknown to him.

The chopping of wood becomes long and boring—motion in silence and silence in motion ring throughout the tundra, save for the occasional chirp from the casual rabbit. Dream hasn't found him yet, and he hopes it holds true as long as his title lives. The sky becomes dim, and so he finishes the last durabilities of his axe, grabs gravel along the way, and heads into the igloo. Instinctively, he collapses on the bed and sleeps, not surprised that it actually works, which means only one thing

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"Dream, why are you still in the Nether?" George grins.

Silence.

"...Dream?"

"I lost the portal."

George laughs, knowing full well, "You can't be serious."

"I did."

"You're so bad."

"Shut up."

George scales down the ladder to greet his advancement—*Zombie Doctor*.

And *then* Dream says, "What? You found an igloo?"

"Can you not, like, analyze everything I'm doing."

"You say that like I don't have to do that to catch you. *I have* to analyze everything you're doing, but I can't... find this stupid portal. Did you hide it or something?"

"No, Dream, that'd be ridiculous," George lies, rather poorly, as he sets up his trades.

"You did, didn't you? You're such a sly... *muffin top*," Dream says, "Oh, I can hear it—where'd it go?"

"Oh my God. Don't use muffin ever again."

"What? Why?" Dream laughs.

"No reason."

George's inventory stocks up and sells out on sticks rather quickly, and so finally, after considering lumberjacks to have his utmost respect, the cleric gets his shit together. Likewise, he receives his set of pearls and climbs back up the ladders, taking their bed with him to explode in another dimension—he finds it a genius mechanic, no matter how strange.

And just in time, really, because the claws of an axe pierce the snow in front of him as soon as he walks out of the entrance, catching part of his body on the way.

"Hi, George~" Dream giggles.

"What!? How'd you get here so quickly?!"

Dream doesn't answer, or rather, his response is the acidic shriek of more iron biting his body. With a quick swipe of his sword, George flees, and so their game of cat and mouse resume, their respective roles staying rigid as they were at the beginning.

"**Come 'ere**," Dream barks, drunk on ambition.

The carnivorous tone of voice sends George into an intoxicating asphyxia. Not soon after, Dream decides all this running is going to be annoying and George feels the hook of a fishing rod pull him backwards. The icy betrayal hits him cold on the back, and so does the predatory shadow of a body and an axe.

"Dream, just let me go," George begs, "I'm begging you."

His opponent laughs deliciously, rolling his eyes at such a pathetic plea.

"Oh, c'mon," George continues, "I can... give you something?"

"Oh, not this again."

"What? It's basically routine, now."

"Whatever, you're gonna lose anyway. Might as well."

"Ok, rude. I guess I *won't* give you my mum's number."

A pause until Dream speaks again out of shock.

"Your *what*?"

"My m—"

"I heard what you said, but you better not scam me."

"I won't."

"I can't believe you."

"Then kill me."

Dream doesn't kill him, but his axe is *so* close to dropping on the sheer whim. A moment later, instead of sinking its fang into George's flesh, it falls to the snow next to him.

"You have until the stronghold. Go find it, you snake."

Heart still aflame, George gets up as Dream steps back, and he feels the sharp stare dig into his back just as greedily as the fishing rod did. The feeling continues, if not amplifies, as he walks farther, eventually running into the direction his first eye went. A quick glance back shows Dream's incredible self restraint as he watches his prey flee right from his eyes. His figure slithers away and the pitiful crunch of ground under George's feet is the only thing keeping him sane.

The eye's path leads him up a mountain and stops there, and likewise, he takes an iron pickaxe he now deems shit to dig straight down—a sin he's grown accustomed to, and doesn't plan to stop.

It is something much like Dream, but it's not like he'll ever admit that.

After fifty-something blocks, the surprised gaze of cold stone brick latches onto him when he

enters the stronghold, as well as the emptiness of its portal frames and the lava that boils around it.

"Well, guess that's my queue," Dream just barely hisses, likely through a gritted grin, "You're mine, George."

Above him, Dream's name comes running, so George sneaks below the hole he's made. Upon Dream plummeting down with the intention to meet the ground with water, George appears to below him, jumping up to place a block of cobble to interrupt his fall, and so Dream's meeting with the ground is not as friendly as he thinks it would've gone.

A simultaneous roar of triumph and loss deafen them both.

"What!?! That is so—oh my God..." Dream begins, "I literally hate you. You—ok. Whatever."

To which George giggles, "You're so bad~ ahaha. What an L."

"You—listen, idiot. You're giving me your mom's number after this. Just shut up and beat the game, already."

"Whatever you say."

And so their game ends with George exploding to a misplaced block on the wrong side of the bed and watching the rain of experience twinkle condescendingly at his dead feet.

All Dream can do is laugh, but questionably fair and square, that counts as a win.

-

The stable carpet on the oak floor is comfort to George's feet, one of their dogs nudging curiously at his hand. He pets it softly and gives it rotten flesh to entertain itself with—they have plenty. Their eyesore of a prison house is too late to be fixed, but it is sufficient, though he's jealous of Alyssa's house. Dream and George both are, and probably everyone else on the server is. Their aquarium teems with fish with names he cannot remember, but they keep the water busy enough.

A ping from his phone sounds clearly next to his head as he walks to their farm, so then his blocky silhouette dims just a little bit.

"Uh... Dream?"

"Yeah?"

"Why did my mum just text me about a wedding?"

And then George swears that the next time he hears a noise so ear-shriekingly high, it'll be from buying and using a tea kettle to pummel Dream with.

"You're so stupid."

## Chapter 9

### Chapter Summary

DAMN this had a long nether section

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The tongues of the jungle's vines lick at George's body, for it is hungry for something to eat. Unfortunately, they won't be satiated because he takes a pair of shears to cut them off for possible later use.

A peak of grey stands out of the green, or rather, to him specifically, the dark yellow— a jungle pyramid. Nothing much comes out of them, save for bones or string or books that neither Dream or George know they will use. It is pitiful loot for the desperate, much like pillager outposts, but George is a pitiful person and he knows his way around it. Digging on the side of the wall at precisely the right block, the brown backside of a chest shows itself to him, and sticking his hand in curiously, he finds a couple of iron ingots and a saddle, along with its surprisingly bold friends today, two diamonds.

"Oohhh," George says, "Yeah..."

"What?" Dream asks.

"Nothing."

He waits a few seconds before closing the chest, and then scampers off, earning himself the [*Diamonds!*] advancement.

"What? Are you underground?"

"Uhh, no."

"You're such a liar—you're looking for lava right now."

"I'm literally not lying. Like, actually."

"Whatever."

George continues through the dense mob of undergrowth, its various types of vegetation hissing for a bite of his flesh. Ignoring them, he digs his own teeth into the juice of a watermelon to entertain his senses. The light of day is finished with its job, and so the world around him gradually loses its color, or whatever it has left for him. At one point, he hops along a shallow pond, and on the other side is the calm hushes of a plains biome. Tired of the jungle, he scatters cobble under his feet to greet its flat terrain, along with its flowery, yet lazy, inhabitants. They bask in the moonlight, and George is jealous of their tranquility.

As he wipes the sugar off his face, he spots the glow of fire eating back a lone tree, and upon closer inspection, it is a lava pool staring at him with potential. So, pulling out a bucket of water,

he gets straight to work.

"George, George, George of the jungle..." Dream starts, "Look out for me~"

"What?" George laughs, filling out the obsidian.

"Well, you went into the jungle didn't you?"

"...What jungle?"

"Oh, you mined into this pyramid. Why would you do that—there's never anything in there."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Yes, you do."

"I actually don't—where have you *been*?" George asks incredulously, or at least, makes the attempt.

"Ugh, shut up and get out here already."

"Wh—get out *where*?"

"You know what, never mind. Nowhere."

George smiles in confusion, amusement, and a little bit of nervousness, but like usual, the lava pool boils its indifference at his predicament, and the corner of obsidian he's made hisses in a similar tone. The silent gate arches over him, soon to be howling its wake when George attends to it with a scrape of flint against steel. He steps a foot into its purple face, letting the wisps disorient him.

But of course, what is more disorienting is a figure racing to him out the corner of his eye. Despite him being rather far away, it grips George's heart all the same.

"What—!?"

"Oh, Georgie-poo! Come 'ere!"

And before Dream satisfies his sword with a nice, saccharine slice through George's sinews, the portal stretches its violet mouth to consume him over to the Nether, but the other side is less than tolerable. Walls and walls of red rock arrogantly hold themselves high, with teeth of quartz condescendingly poking out here and there—tempting, but unnecessary in the way that it only exists for the luxurious.

He is in a ravine, and on the God that he doesn't believe in, he prays that he has enough time to tower up.

Upon his true entrance to the top, a warped forest gossips to itself at his arrival, dark particles flying idly accompanied by a haze that drunkens his vision. He runs through it, and thankfully unlike the jungle, they don't mind his business here, as the vines let him weave away without even a hint of hunger.

"Where'd you go, George?"

A lava lake opens up, flowing in a boiling slumber and uncaring if he lives or dies. Striders wander peacefully on its face, and George is envious of their freedom. Warped fungi sit back and watch their game of cat and mouse, so he decides to take them along to continue a portion of it. Making a

fishing rod and taking out a saddle, he befriends the Nether's new bipedal creature, now more sanguine in his journey in their sanguine home.

Riding along the Nether's blood, George looks behind him to see Dream's sickly silhouette leaping across the nylium, stopping short of the shore with the rest of the pride of striders.

"Oh, you—what!? Ugh, you got lucky with that jungle pyramid, didn't you?"

George giggles, a confirmation without an answer.

Streams of lava drool from above, no longer icky like it is in the Overworld, but reminiscent of saliva nonetheless. His strider croaks its apparent indifference, unsurprising because the heat is its comfort zone. George just lets it do its job, guiding it with the string of fungi. He doesn't get the appeal, but he lessens its standards—he is an alien to its home, after all. An absentminded hand comes to brush its faint hairs, and a small appreciative warble echoes against its gums.

The rigid, dark netherbrick soon shows itself to him, half exhumed on a shore and a cliff. He stops on a deposit of gravel, his strider now dull and shivering. Seeing the poor thing suffer, George takes off its saddle, letting it wander back to its Nickelodeon-colored hot tub. He laughs silently at the comparison he just made.

"Ugh... what... am I meant to do?" Dream mutters, "I can't track you over... wherever you are."

George giggles smugly, "I dunno."

"It's not funny."

George giggles even more, "Yes, it is."

He reaches the top of the fortress's bridge, the solid clank of his armor harmonious with the crackling of the fire around him. His path closes off to a tunnel, and even more intersections—physically and emotionally empty, save for the occasional rustle of withered bones. He'll have to remember to be wary of them.

After some time of wandering, he hears the resentful weep of a Blaze's lullaby. It floats ghostly around the corner, and receiving a whack to the face in the process, he obtains its rod. Further in the tunnel it came from, the delightful cage of a spawner sits grandly idle until George approaches it.

Upon crafting a diamond sword with his jungle loot, three blazes awaken, and three rods return with the bite of heat on his skin. He hisses, patting the fire off of him, and waits with a lamb chop in hand. Just four more to go.

"Come back Georgie," Dream says, playfully teasing and soft, "Don't you miss me, too?"

George scoffs, reasonably unsettled by his tone, "No?"

"*George*, just love me back."

He can sense the fake frown on Dream's face, so with a begrudging grimace, he ignores it. It makes him uneasy.

Two more Blazes and one rod, accompanied by a bloody nose of which actually hurts. He hisses.

"George?"



"What?"

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, why?"

Three more Blazes and two rods, followed by a bruising arm and burnt fingers.

A low, unsettling growl, "You're about to not be."

It is partnered with a single name scattering haphazardly through the netherrack.

"Wh—Already?!?"

So, deciding to abandon the potential of an eighth rod, George flees, and right at the intersection is the familiar smile and the all too uncanny cackle that sears itself into George's head.

It makes him fucking sick.

"No—Oh my God, you scared me!"

More cackling, "C'mere Georgie~!"

And so returns their traditional game of cat and mouse. The fortress's ex-silent bricks now wail at him to flee through the way it crackles when they beat their boots.

"Leave me alone, Dream!"

"No way."

They run past wither skeletons, who perk their heads up, curious for their next victim of vengeance. George's path leads to a bridge, but its tongue is cut short. With no other option left, he pulls out his Overworld vines and jumps off the ledge.

"What— you *jumped*?!?" Dream says.

The green of the vines latch tightly onto the last few maroon bricks near the ground, though it is not like George can tell the difference. Collecting them back with shears, he takes an exhausted look up, smiling as Dream fends himself off.

"Haha~ bet you didn't think of MLG vines, huh?" George giggles, backing away.

And he immediately regrets it, because soon Dream is plummeting down to his level, landing softly on vines of his own.

Except this time, they latch themselves to the ground with a bluer, more alien tinge.

*MLG Twisting Vines?*

"YOU—*WHAT?! YOU DID!?*" George exclaims.

Dream resumes chuckling, and his pursuit is as alive as ever. There is not hesitation to George's pivot as he turns the opposite direction, leaping haphazardly across the shore. Spotting a nearby strider, he pulls out his saddle and his fishing rod of warped fungi. Dream's blade of iron narrowly misses George's ankles as he hops atop the ex-idle creature and rides off.

"Noooo... ugh, you're so lucky," Dream whines.

"No, I'm just good."

Dream hums sarcastically, and George giggles, patting his strider with a steady hand. It responds with a carefree chirp, glad to do service in return for a nice treat.

"And I waddled away," George begins smugly, "Waddle waddle."

Dream continues the gesture, albeit begrudgingly, "'Till the very next day..."

"Bum bum bum bum bum-ba dum..." They both finish.

The rest of the ride is silence from the two, save for a single, "I despise you so much for this, George," of which George enjoys hearing very much, especially when he has a clear advantage. In actuality, the Nether is annoyingly loud, what with its bubbles of lava warbling its woes and lonely echoes bouncing through fleshy netherrack.

A biome of suffering and recovery.

Familiar pale blue trees, or rather, giant wooden fungi, he supposes, peek out of its dark haze, alerting George to the fact that he will leave this alien place soon. Delighted, he leads his strider towards the shore. It wiggles its big head, much like a cat, reassuringly to him as he takes his saddle back. Shivering, it trots back to its boiling habitat of the lava's surface.

George turns, a little sad to leave it, especially in Dream's presence and his notorious reputation for killing animals of any kind. The warped nylum eats at his feet, and darkish particles busy themselves like bees even though they do nothing but look pretty, which is something that George wishes an enderman would do when he hears one *vwoop* nearby. Peering around, the statuesque figure can be seen inspecting a warped fungi.

He glances up to its eyes with a sultry, exhausted look and watches as it grotesquely unhinges its mouth, snapping out of its trance of tranquility. After an understandable and potential black eye, he finally receives a pearl, concluding that the only stable relationship he'll have with a tall, dark, and handsome man is Dream, though it's not like he'll ever admit it.

Unfortunately, endermen don't spawn in hauntings in the Nether, but it'll suffice better than the Overworld can. He downs a quick and unsatisfyingly unseasoned chunk of pork chop while looking around for another, who easily stands out holding a block of nylum in its lanky hands. Nothing comes from it save for four hearts down.

A bit of time passes grinding for pearls, but on his fifth, the all too distinct sickly silhouette of Dream comes bounding across alongside the Nether's wall.

*Oh. My God.*

"Oh, I've missed your face, George!" Dream playfully and softly teases, "Quit moving so fast—I don't want to be without you~"

"Go away," he laughs nervously, "You're freaking me out, Dream."

Dream giggles, "Good."

So, George decides to abandon the warped forest's teal, slightly thankful for its help and slightly resentful for aiding Dream as well. Perhaps it is a relative to the ocean—entertained by their game

of cat and mouse, and willing to help either side to fuel its feeling of omniscience.

Sprouts curl away for him to weasel through, and vines wave their condolences as he runs for his life, which is strange because it seems it is not what they hoped when Dream passed along earlier.

His feet meet netherrack, and eventually the promise of the portal's murmurs in its cage of a ravine. Taking his vines, he is just barely saved by their grip on him when he plunges to the bottom of the wall. The portal, now extraordinarily loud, wraps its limbs around him, covering his eyes like a mother shielding her child from trauma, though he still faintly sees Dream's repulsive form hounding towards him with teeth bared, white and hungry like the Nether's quartz counterparts.

Behind his back, George brittles his pearls and rods into their collaborative Eyes, and finally does he burst out into the Overworld's air. The cool temperature mellows his skin's seared anguish, and he is relieved, but of course, that feeling is dangerous in times like these.

Throwing an eye up to the air, its particles brush his face as it floats to the left, mocking him. Not gracing it with another thought, he runs to catch it. The grass chokes on his feet as he pounds his way through the plains, who hold their silence for the moon above, along with her inhabitants of hostile mobs.

"Georgie~! Where'd you go!?"

"Leave me alone, Dream, *please*."

And usual does the plea prove fruitless, and likewise does their eternal chase continue, whether it is with feelings or with games. Even though Dream seems to be far behind him, George's heart is an anvil taking a toll on his body.

He comes across a dark forest, and hoping it will hide him sufficiently, he weaves through their selfishly thick logs and arrogantly giant mushrooms. The next eye he throws veers to his right, and spotting a shallow pond, he judges that the stronghold is close by. Pulling out his pickaxe, he mines the stone at the bottom of the water three blocks deep and goes from there, blocking the top with andesite so as to camouflage.

"Ugh, so annoying," Dream mumbles, "It's like... six inches—I mean, blocks—thick."

George giggles, still a little unsettled, "*What?*"

"Of *leaves*."

George probably shouldn't pause mining, but he can't help but laugh stupidly, "What is wrong with you??"

"You know what I meant."

"No, I didn't. You said inches."

An amused mutter of, "So stupid..." and then a reaffirmed "Okay, shut up. You're dead," comes from Dream next.

Forty blocks down, stone bricks with their mossy and cracked makeup stare at George's entrance in surprise as he crashes on a water fountain. An additional enderman is taken aback by his rude intrusion, and George scowls back at it, swinging his diamond sword at its legs. After a few deep scratches on the face, he is given back a pearl for his efforts—it is the sixth.

Either way, George hopes the stronghold doesn't mind his constant weaseling between its organs. Listening for the gargle of lava, George steps as quietly as he can so as to prevent the ripple of echoes of his iron boots on the stone floor from disturbing the stale air. Along the way, the idle slumber of chests gives him not two, but four more pearls, and he appreciates their help very much. Brittling them with hot powder, he continues.

The warmth and light of lava alerts him to the jaws of the portal room very quickly, and tearing apart its storage of guards, he kills the rest of its squeaky friends. It is a one-eye, and George has ten.

One more to go.

And he wishes he wasn't interrupted counting, because the eager crash of a separate iron-adorned entity finally reconciles with him.

"There you are~" Dream singsongs, "Oh, wow. You've made progress."

But his tone of admiration only urges at George the intimate feeling that he might die. Likewise, the painful push against George's body sends him catching himself in a single block of water and a surrounding hiss of obsidian in the middle of the bottom of the End portal.

A Nickelodeon-colored hot tub—only difference is now, George doesn't find it so funny anymore.

Fruitlessly swinging with his diamond sword, he smells the saccharine gold of an apple as Dream comes down to him with an iron sword to his neck.

A tantalizing, sweet smile drags across Dream's face, "Did you know how much I missed you?"

"Aha... I dunno? Please don't kill me, Dream."

"Oh, just die. For me? Please?"

That last part is so unnecessary, because Dream is so close to making it come true, and it makes George incalculably irritated, but he does not plan on discussing it in case Dream still has some bit of mercy.

"I'll—okay, okay. Just... wait for me to get the last pearl, okay?" George continues.

"Sure," Dream just barely lowers to a growl, "What's in it for me, hm?"

"Wait—hold on—," the sword threatens closer to George's face, making him lose more of his words, "I'll, uh—I'll make us some steak tonight?"

Dream dramatically tilts his head in thought, going as far as to bring a finger up to his chin like some villain in an act, though to be fair, that's all he is.

"Maybe," he says.

"Maybe?"

"It better be your best."

"Uhh, how do you want it cooked?"

"Hm... I'll think about it later."

"Al...right," George says steadily.

Dream retracts his sword, though it is still pointed up with bared, menacing teeth, and backs away as equally cautious, while George makes the effort to right himself up on his feet. Their eyes bore into each other, a tension so suffocating, they might as well have died in a wall of gravel from their emotions alone.

A cesspool of love.

Slowly, George towers up, taking a pickaxe who he now deems shit. The stone around him keeps silent, careful to intrude on their business, because George is so on edge, a slight unwarranted movement might shock him to death.

He reaches the surface after a frustrating amount of digging. The grass receives him soundly, and the rising sunlight stabs through the trees—if George was just a tad bit weaker, it would stab through him, too.

Regardless, the dark forest's "six inches thick of leaves," as Dream says it, provides sufficient shade for mobs to lurk, and that is all he needs. Chewing on a bland piece of pork chop, he sends his eyes around for but one man—he doesn't have to be tall, nor does he have to be dark and handsome. Just one enderman of any stature will prove satisfactory, as long as he declares for himself the fortune of having a pearl.

One teleports around rather haphazardly under the trees, a croak sounding in each ear, indicative of two beings, but in truth, comes from just one. George watches it play with the shrubbery, a little saddened that it'll have to go.

His sword makes clean cuts through its body, who is now once again re-soaked in purple. A pearl rolls measly on the ground until George saves it from despawning. It softens in his grip before Blaze powder brittles its texture, making it open its pupil. Storing it away, he comes back to the hole he's made and starts digging.

The stone that surrounds him as he mines down gossip their condolences in his revisit to them. Soon, he lands back in the water he had placed upon nearly being killed, and peering through the stone bricks' faces, it seems that Dream is not found.

Yet.

Not gracing it with a thought, George fulfills the portal's last prayer and before it howls its empty sorrows, its dark space overtakes his form and sends him flat on a plate of obsidian.

"Oh, you're back already?" Dream says.

George responds, understandably a little confused that he's not dead yet, "Yeah, what have you been doing?"

"Nothing."

"Uh-huh..." comes George's unconvinced hum.

The dragon roars power on her ten thrones, waiting for his challenge, and so, George readies his cobble and bridges over. The endstone waits for him expectantly just over the void.

And he'd greet them gladly, if not for Dream's advancement following his.

*Shit.*

Jumping, finally, on the mainland, George turns around to see his dear friend wolwing him towards him with malicious desire.

"You're so dead, George!" He says.

George unsheathes his diamond sword, swinging it heavily at Dream's feet just as he leaps over. He looks down as Dream's sick silhouette plummets into emptiness.

"What, no—!"

"Ahaha! Bye, Dream~ you're so bad."

And of course, George immediately regrets saying so, because an endearing enderpearl nearly bullets at his face. Either way, Dream appears behind him with even more bite than he entered, and George feels his bones sink as a hungry blade pushes him off the ledge. Fruitlessly, he grabs the ledge, just barely holding himself up with his arms.

"Oh my God, no— Dream, let me up," he pleads, "Help me."

Strangely, Dream kneels down, his eyes filled with a deranged tint. He painstakingly leans in close, grabbing George's wrists in the process.

"...Dream?"

"By the way, make it medium rare," he says lowly in an ear.

George's hands are lifted from the endstone, and he's left hanging just by Dream's silly definition of mercy—George's grip is so tight that it might keep him sane.

"Dream, don't let me go," he says softly, "Please?"

And by surprise, Dream doesn't let him go—his grip just as tight, if not more. Instead, he lets himself fall off, dooming them both, and George's eyes widen angrily at the stupid little play of words.

"WHAT—NO—NOT LIKE THAT!" He screams.

Dream responds with a shit-eating tone, "I mean, I did what you said, didn't I? I'll never let you go."

They crash onto the sickening, solid ground of the Overworld, items now lost to the void. Dream sits atop of George, pinning him down.

"I hate you so much," George says.

-

George stands in front of the cast iron pan, its busy sizzles rendering out fat from beef, along with the active smell of rosemary and butter and garlic brushing his nose. At the same time, a comfortable and annoying hug from Dream clings to his back.

"Is it done, yet?" he mumbles into George's neck.

"Couple more seconds."

"What?" Dream drawls, "It's already medium at this point."

"No, it's not."

Eventually, the steaks are brought to a cutting board and George slices through the cooked flesh, fanning them out in an elegant manner.

"See? It's pink," George says.

And he's right, for the most part, but Dream is unwilling to admit that he's wrong.

"Shut up, you can't even see pink."

## Chapter End Notes

when i tell u when i discovered you can mlg with the new teal vines in the nether.... it was Something

# Chapter 10

## Chapter Summary

OHH MY GOD THIS CHAPTER TOOK THE LIFE OUT OF ME.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"58...59....60."

George stands in arrogant condescension, adorned with the prestigious scales of full netherite armor. It's a new look—he's never worn it before, but it drags a smug smile on his face all the same.

An undeserved king with his undeserved throne, the British bastard.

Meanwhile, Dream has just gotten most of his stone tools, silently cursing to himself. The friendly and voluminous cobble of a village contrasts its structure against the natural sky and the flat plains. Arriving there, Dream does not bother to say hello, unfortunately, and takes their rather rich supply of hay bales. He sends his eyes around for their guardian, specifically his lanky arms and face full of boredom. The man is seen idly picking at a pitiful poppy, so, likewise, Dream dances on a pillar of dirt after giving it a playful punch, and the iron knight is slain by a stone sword after several consecutive fits of metallic cries. Leaping down, he collects his measly "reward" of three iron ingots and an even more measly remainder of red petals.

*You gotta be joking...*

His path makes way to a dense population of trees. The dark forests' towering mushrooms eye him for willing to take on such a challenge, but he is not in the least bit surprised by their gossip. The trees themselves, by contrast, are entertained by their game of cat and mouse, preferring to wave their condolences with the rustle of their leaves. Seeing that the terrain is splattered with bodies of water, he makes a boat, appreciative of the environment's offers.

"Oh Dream~" Dream turns around to see a syrupy smile carving itself on George's face.

"What—Oh my God!"

And before Dream can take back his crafting bench, the midnight sword dazzled with a neon glow just barely scrapes its teeth on his neck. With a measly stab of his own stone sword, he knocks George a little ways backwards, though not at all enough.

"George, leave me be!"

George giggles and takes another hungry swipe, nearly catching Dream's back, "No way."

Four heart slots are empty, praying that the rest of the six will be spared. Grimacing, Dream places dirt behind him, blocking George away for the tiniest escape of time. A patch of light sits itself idly on the ground, indicating that the leaves have retracted opening for him to tower up. Reaching it, he hisses as George's onyx blade cuts at his ankles, bringing him down to half health as he



scrambles above.

"No—ugh, you're so annoying," George stares up at him.

Dream doesn't comment, preferring to chuckle with caution. He turns to the sea of vegetation and for now, the integrity of the trees serve to bear his weight for their game. Thankfully so, they don't try to latch onto his feet, for they are not looking for anyone to eat.

A shore lies before him, gaping blue with potential, along with a patch of gravel. Careful to avoid the mistake of his last juggernaut adventure, he is quick to grab a flint, and does so after breaking a few blocks. Pulling out a boat, he readies it on the edge of the sand and climbs in.

But, of course, he is not alone, because George's sickly silhouette comes bulletting through the crowd of logs, eyes laced with a sultry malignity.

"Dream~ AHAHA!" he cackles, "Come here~!"

Gritting his teeth, he tries his fastest to ride away, but the boat sways in disorientation, and he turns to see that George is even faster to hop in with him.

"Wh—George! Go away!"

"No, I'm staying wherever you go, Dream~"

George lovingly stabs through Dream's back, only for it to not register. Instead, it clips through his body without a shrug of resistance.

"Ugh, I can't hit you while I'm in here," George complains.

"Then get out of my boat," Dream sasses.

"Why? You're gonna leave me," George giggles.

"Well, obviously."

George makes a baffled sound, though he really shouldn't be surprised at all, "Okay, rude."

The ocean accommodates both of them, though Dream is not sure what to do besides scouting for shipwrecks, and even then, it would probably be a bad idea to abandon his boat. Packs of kelp and seagrass wave their leaves in laughter, entertained by their game. Dream internally side-eyes them while biting his bread.

George, seeing that he has no choice but to continue like this, unequips his sword and rests his chin on Dream's shoulder, along with the snake of his arms around his abdomen.

"What," Dream says, "the hell are you doing?"

George shrugs, "Nothing. I dunno, I'm just waiting for you to do something."

"No—not that, idiot. Your hands."

"I'm just *hugging* you, jeez."

"That's not something you would do."

"I'm comforting you before you die. To me."

"Oh my God, you're so annoying. Fine. Alright."

And just like that, Dream digs one of the paddles straight into the water, making the boat turn, and eventually, spin. He doesn't plan on stopping.

"Dream—what are you doing?"

The response is only a shit-eating giggle.

"Oh my God, Dream, you're gonna make me dizzy."

More giggles, "Good."

This backfires slightly, because George's grip on him is just a tad tighter than before.

"Dream, stop it," George begins to laugh nervously, "*Please*, just—just drive the boat. What is wrong with you?"

"I am! I *am* driving the boat," Dream says, technically true.

"...I hate you so much."

Dream giggles, "Then get out."

"No, I'm not letting you go."

Dream internally rolls his eyes, grunting in annoyance. He lets the ocean continue to play her game with them, however much it'll cost to keep George at bay, and she has to hand it to him—playing with George is *very* fun.

That is, until one of her other servants narrowly misses them with the kiss of a trident, and she makes no move to stop him.

"Dream!" George's head perks up, "There's a... *man* over there."

*Shit.*

"C'mon," George urges it, "Come here, gurgler~ pspsp come here. Hit us—hit the boat."

"No—oh my God," Dream says, now having to veer them away.

The drowned bubbles its rotten mouth, stretching its kelp-ridden arms to throw yet another trident.

Unfortunately, it lands its shot this time and the boat collapses on itself, planks breaking haphazardly onto the surface with no way of getting them back together.

"Oh, come *on*," Dream says, now narrowly dodging George's midnight sword with his ashen one.

He swims away, hoping the ocean will listen to his pleas to live. And she does, because he spots an idle dolphin nudging through a crowd of kelp.

"C'mere, dolphin," he prays, "Please."

"Oh, what—you can't be serious."

Likewise, it chirps its sympathies to Dream's side and he speeds away with its aid.

"I hate you so much," George says, "Ok, whatever. I'm getting food—you are so lucky I didn't just *destroy* you."

And all Dream can do is chuckle triumphantly. The ocean, apparently picking a favorite, guides him through her currents. It seems that she is satisfied with her day's entertainment and that she looks forward to what he brings. Realizing he is alive from mercy, he continues humbly, spotting the relieving silhouette of a certain wooden structure lying lonely and half buried in the sand's skin.

He climbs into the shipwreck's insides, and it opens up readily, for it is in need of a friend. Unfortunately, Dream is only there to gut its valuables out for his own needs. The dolphin will be able to console its emptiness once he leaves, hopefully. Fourteen iron ingots, two pieces of gold, and a delighted single diamond find themselves a new purpose when they leave their home.

"Oh, what?" George says, "A diamond? How many shipwrecks did you go to?"

Dream smiles.

"Well, you're probably just gonna make a shovel," George continues, "What else can you do with a diamond... one?"

Dream giggles, "'A diamond one'?"

"Shut up."

As Dream swims out, he hears the whine of wooden agony as it reconciles with its circle of abandonment, comforted by the sway of kelp leaves. The water nudges softly at him as he crocodiles at the surface—a natural feeling to his skin, the Floridian fucker.

He finds another shipwreck resting on a shore, and wishing the dolphin well, although begrudgingly, he peers into the mess's decay to see if it has anything good for him. The sound of an opened chest follows through, with the clink of more iron and a handful of emeralds. However, there is nothing else other than that, and the sand scrapes his face upon his way back to land.

Perhaps it is karma for leaving it in the first place, but he doesn't regret it.

Spruce trees see him pass by and the best they can do is nothing but let their leaves snicker at him. He doesn't let it go without some consequence, chopping down a few logs for a boat or two. Making a new crafting table, he makes a chestplate and a bucket.

"Ugh, you got armor already?" George complains.

"Yeah? What about it?"

"Can you, like, give it to me?"

"*Give it to y*—You are full netherite, George," Dream sasses, "Stop whining."

"I'm not whining; I'm complaining."

"They're the same thing."

"Okay, whatever," George deflects, "All I know is that you're going to lose."

"Yeah," comes an untruthfully unconvinced hum, "*Sure*."

Dream resumes around the forest, trying to sniff out another source of more materials.

"Well," George continues, "At least you didn't go very far."

"What? I swam like two hundred blocks."

"You wish."

And like that, Dream feels the grave bite of a sultry sword breathe on his back, a love letter from George to him. He can't return it.

"Wait—WHAT!?"

An eerie grin is cut on George's face, "Hi, Dream~ C'mere!"

Dream scrambles forward, staggering, but managing to just barely keep his distance.

"Get away from me!"

"No," George giggles, "I'm not leaving you."

An equally terrifying smile tears across the ground farther in the vegetation, gaping in emptiness and potential, and Dream, recognizing it, kicks his feet up at their arrival to its cliff. A stream of lava stares up at him, along with the lurking eyes of bedtime mobs who have yet to wait for their turn to hunt. He lands, albeit uneasily, at the other side of the ravine and places his last blocks haphazardly behind him before George can do the same.

A bone-chilling crunch against cobble, but no name indicative of a funeral alleviates Dream's exhaustion. Taking the risk to look down, it appears that George has MLG-blocked soon enough to avoid death, and on a haybale, at that, somehow.

Not like he really needs it, though.

George grits his teeth as he begins to tower up, "Oh, you're so dead—I *knew* you were gonna use that ravine."

But just by sheer luck, a distant arrow manages to dig its teeth right to George's side, knocking him into the hungry arms of the aforementioned lava stream.

"What—No, a skeleton?!?! Are you serious?"

And all Dream can do is laugh, plummeting down with a water bucket to soften his fall.

"Well, all your food burned," Dream comments.

George grunts in response, "You're so lucky."

Dream continues through the ravine, finding that it is actually intersected by another, deeper ravine. Scaling down further, it opens up to a broken mineshaft growing dark from the ground closing up its jaw above.

What a beautiful thing that he doesn't have to resort to the sin of digging straight down, even though he knows in his heart that George wouldn't love him any less for it.

He finds plenty of iron there, along with a sufficient supply of gold. A cluster of saturated teal lies snuggled tightly in the crowd of lava stone. With a gasp, Dream jumps down to water-covered obsidian and appreciates the ravine's mercy.

"What?" George says.

"Nothing," Dream starts to mine, and the twinkle of experience points is Christmas music to his ears, even though there are only three diamonds.

He sets up his furnaces, letting them breathe their fires with some nearby coal, and allows his ores to cook. The lava beside him bubbles in anticipation, and he satisfies them with a hiss of his water bucket. Soon, the Nether portal's body is complete, standing over him in expectation. Likewise, it lets out a dreadful yawn when Dream clicks his flint and steel.

But he is not done in the Overworld quite yet.

While he waits for the rest of his raw iron and gold, he uses some spare ingots to make shears, and a delicate collection of cobwebs make themselves home in his hotbar. The mineshaft whispers, thanking him for the clearance of its dead gears. Its curious bats do the same.

Upon travelling, the gossip of arachnids and mossy cobble catches his attention, and turning his head, it is none other than a dungeon. He pokes his green head in, and after enduring a couple of bug bites, he breaks the spawner. The sound of chests opening echo to reveal a plethora of string, bread loaves, and a delightful golden apple.

He rounds back to his portal and collects his furnaces back, now clad in full iron, save for the golden boots. His four diamonds become a shovel and a pickaxe, a pity that he cannot have one more.

Regardless, he lets the portal's howling sorrows ooze its arms around him in a hug of which will not be returned. The other side greets him with fair weather friends and the sweet smell of lively sulfur. Red vines surround him, weeping in their bristles as the carmine territory generates like crawling spiders.

A crimson forest.

Looking around, it appears that he is right at its edge, where the majority of his surroundings are Nether wastes. Dream grows uneasy at its sanguine decay, and so does itself, though it is more that it fears what the response is to its melancholic self-reflection—the echo or the answer. The carnivorous sway of grass nips at his feet in mahogany agony, hungry for something to eat.

Dream turns around to mine the obsidian behind him, and the violet face of the portal shatters, voice cracking upon its death. Getting the rest is time consuming.

"Oh Dream~" a voice filled with desire, "*Ice Bucket Challenge*,' huh?"

Especially when another violet face reappears with a sharp, midnight tongue right to his nose, angry at its unrequited hug, and Dream's heart turns heavy.

"Wh—you're here already!?"

"What'd you expect?" George laughs, his sword narrowly slicing Dream's cheek.

Dream makes no hesitation to run, trampling across uncaring scarlet. Eyes of quartz snicker at his demise, but he has no time to snap back at them.

"Oh—oh my God," George says, "Why are there so many!?"

Taking a quick glance behind, George seems to be having some trouble handling the hoard of

Piglins for his lack of wealth, or moreover, the overabundance of it. They grunt their rightful revolution, toppling him with the bite of their starving golden swords, and feast on the rich with abandon.

George fruitlessly attempts to tower up, only to be caught by the curious arrow

"No—What!?"

And so the undeserving king is toppled off his undeserving throne, and that is enough to bring Dream relief. He laughs at his reversed demise.

"Ahaha~, you didn't have gold," Dream comments.

"Shut up, I didn't know you were gonna spawn where there were, like, a million of them."

A chuckle, "Well, you should have prepared!"

"It's not funny," George pouts, probably mocked by onlooking flowers just as easily.

"Yes, it is."

Dream resumes his run through the Nether, looking for the specific pattern of fresh burgundy brick. He gathers a stack or two of netherrack, as streams of lava from above threaten to grip his feet. Clusters of glowstone shine brightly in their respective cliques, watching Dream and wishing him luck. He guesses that he will need a lot of it, so he does not ignore their pity.

Suddenly, an advancement is indicative of slumber—not for him, but for George, and he wishes he were there, as much as his name implies.

"*Sweet Dreams*?" Dream comments.

"What? I'm not allowed to sleep?"

"No, I'm just thinking..."

"Wow, you think?"

Dream laughs, "Shut up."

A jet black contrasts with vermillion, and it is not the type of brick he's searching for, but it is loot all the same. Their inhabitants hum with their teeth poking out and soulless eyes blank. Parallels of lava line themselves up cleanly to its entrance, and so, climbing over the blackstone, he makes an advancement.

"Oh—You're in a bastion?" George says.

Dream giggles, "No."

"What're you gonna get there? You can't open the chests, can you?"

And George is right.

"I'll figure something out," Dream responds.

Taking his handful of cobweb, he drops down to gut the bastion's treasures. Blocks of gold stare at him, the temptresses they are—the chests have the same demeanor. He lays down more cobwebs

and breaks them with his sword, receiving string in return. With this string, he makes wool that purposes itself into a bed. Then, he sets it in the center, careful not to make an attempt to sleep—even though his exhausted body wishes so much for rest—before placing a block between.

A cube of blackstone shields him away from the impact in trying to relieve his exhaustion. The chests lose their solidity, scattering its items on the floor. Unfortunately, most of them simmer to lava's grasp. Dream looks around to find a plethora of arrows and a diamond helmet. He puts it on.

"You got *diamond* armor? Ugh, you're so annoying."

Some more gold and some more obsidian—enough to make a new portal. Dream hears Piglins around him continue their gossip, though none make a move to approach him—possibly out of respect, but more likely out of fear.

Finally leaving the bastion, Dream spots the distant face of maroon poking above cherry-red flesh, of which he scales over quickly. Soon, his feet clank over blackstone bricks' friend, netherbrick. It beats a steady heart at his arrival.

"Oh my God, you made it to the fortress," George observes begrudgingly.

And Dream smiles.

He runs up a flight of stairs to meet the familiar lava well, knowing that if he continues, he will encounter Blazes. Their ghostly gasps breathe in his ear as he goes up yet another flight of stairs and the distinct verbatim of fences sit busily over the open lava. Three appear, and one gives him its treat.

"A Blaze rod already? How're you so quick?" George whines.

"I hold the world record speedrun, George."

Two Blazes and two rods.

"Okay, no need to brag."

Suddenly irritated, Dream bickers, "Wh—*You asked*."

One Blaze and one rod.

"Stop moving so fast, Dream," a pout can be heard in George's voice, "I can't catch up."

Three Blazes and no rods at all, but a painful sear on the eye.

"You're *fine*," Dream says, "You have full netherite."

"Ugh, whatever."

Three Blazes and three rods.

George makes an attempt at a casual conversation, "So, what'd you do in the bastion anyway? Like, how'd you get the loot?"

Two Blazes and one rod. Eight total.

"You don't have to know," Dream responds.

So, of course, his reluctance to answer is met with George's raven blade just scarcely skinning his face. It is accompanied by an insidious and hungry cackle.

"What?! You're here already!?"

"Oh, Dream~" George's voice drools a vicious toxin, "I'm breaking your spawner!"

And deciding to abandon the possibility of a ninth Blaze rod, Dream scrambles away from George's sickly silhouette, who is drunken with an insatiable desire, save for the single pair of golden boots. Wither skeletons perk their heads up in curiosity, laughing at their game of cat and mouse as they join in for the fun of it. A nip to Dream's abdomen from them makes him feel rot spread on his heart, and he sinks his teeth into the saccharine gold of an apple.

"Oh my God!! Leave me alone!" Dream shouts.

"No way—," George giggles, then falters, "Oh, these idiots—"

Dream manages to leave netherbrick, and soon, netherack tumbles below his feet, crashing into lava pools with an agonized splash—that is, *if* you can call them splashes at all—as he runs for his life. He digs and hides into a wall, holding in a breath of fear. Sneaking so as not to be seen, he takes out his obsidian to build a new portal.

"Oh Dream..." George starts in a low and sultry voice, "Come out to play~"

A flick of flint and steel sends the newborn jaw its familiar violet saliva drooling in its response to the Nether's self-reflection—the echo and the answer are one and the same. Dream lets its face take him in, wrapping its lonely arms around his body in a sad hug that may or may not be returned by his own.

He will let George determine that instead.

"Ugh—where'd you go?" George mutters.

Upon Dream's return to the Overworld, a bittersweet and nightly air greets him, along with the rust-colored sand that threatens to consume his feet.

A mesa biome— or rather, a cluster of mesa islands.

He runs across the terrain, greeting the dead bushes that rustle at his demise with interest. They shrivel to his hands, turning into sticks, in case he may need extra later. The croak of two lucky endermen alert him to the fact that he will never be alone, and so do their purple particles. Slaying them, two lucky pearls are his for the taking.

What a merciful drop rate.

And so, his run resumes with a brittle and bloodshot Eye of Ender blinking up at him, pupils dilating in omniscience. It creates a trail of fuschia flickers as it tries to find its way home, and Dream, upon following, waits for it to drop back down.

But alas, its bloodshot veins become more prominent and its last cry is the sound of breaking glass. Dream notes not to vocalize his frustration, letting the lilac shimmers fall hot on his face as he continues left—out towards the ocean. He crafts another boat and the forgiving ocean accepts him back.

"You built another portal, didn't you?" George asks.



A pause.

"Why would I do that?" Dream says.

"You were mining the obsidian off of the original one—why wouldn't you?"

"No, I wasn't."

"Yes, you were—you got advancement, you idiot," George is probably rolling his eyes, "Ugh, I set my bed there for nothing."

"At the portal?"

"Yeah."

"I mean, it wasn't for *nothing*."

A pause of reconsideration stretches from the under-handed praise before George chooses to respond back.

"...Maybe."

Their bickering softly ceases, and Dream's company is now solely the ocean. He wonders if she'll ever have crocodiles just so he can teach George how to handle them.

The water carries him smoothly, and he stops when his path is tangent with a village on a shore. An aimless enderman sits picking at a paved grass path, and Dream decides that, before sleeping, he hopes to be rewarded with a pearl.

And the drop rate gives him mercy, so he is.

The villagers hum their neutrality as he enters one of their homes and lets his body rest.

"*Sweet Dreams*, huh?" George comments.

"What? I'm not allowed to sleep?"

"I just don't think you're that sweet."

Dream, upon realizing the play of words, chuckles a, "That's so stupid."

"You're in a village, aren't you?"

"No."

He cracks his eyes open to the fading orange of the morning. He doesn't have time to pay attention to the fading orange of the morning. A new, clean axe soon finds itself in his hands, along with a fletching table, and he gets right to work.

"I can't find it," George complains, "You're literally so annoying."

Dream makes an amused sound. A silence stretches in between them for a long time. A stack of logs is five hundred and twelve sticks is sixteen emeralds.

"I was right then, you *are* in a village," George continues, "You're probably so far away... I'm turning on subtitles."

Dream chuckles, accompanied by a distant and annoyed hum. Three stacks of logs is one thousand five hundred and thirty-six sticks is forty-eight emeralds.

"Oh my God, my boots broke," George seems like he's panicking, "I hate these... stupid idiots. Go away, here take this."

Dream laughs, followed by a distant and uneasy shout. Four stacks of logs is two thousand and forty-eight sticks is one stack of emeralds.

Then, an [*Oh Shiny!*] advancement pops in the corner.

"Leave me alone—Oh, I hear it, I think—wait, you dug in the wall?!"

"I mean, yeah, why wouldn't I?"

"You just made it, like, ten times longer for me to find."

Dream smiles, "Good."

"Woah, a mesa... It's like... Moo Moo Mesa."

Dream snorts at that, "'Moo Moo Mesa'? You already have 'Moo Moo Meadows'."

"Well... it'll be a safety phrase if Nintendo sues me for copyright."

Dream has a laughing fit, which he shouldn't, because he's trading, "If Nintendo sues you for *copyright*—'."

"What's so funny?"

The smile is still stuck in Dream's voice as he says, "Nothing, nothing."

Five stacks of logs is two thousand five hundred and sixty sticks is eighty emeralds.

George sounds irritated, "You've been boating, haven't you?"

"...Maybe."

Then, an enlightened gasp, "Oooh, a dolphin."

"Ugh," comes the roll of Dream's eyes.

And finally, six stacks of logs is three thousand and seventy-two sticks is a stack and a half of emeralds. Dream scouts the village for a cleric, but alas, no brewing stand remains inherent in their home, so he begrudgingly makes one himself. A nearby inhabitant happily accepts the job.

A handful of redstone, and the sun tilts just a little further across the sky.

"Oh my God—there's another... *guy* here," George says.

"Please die from him."

A couple chunks of lapis and it's past midday. The cleric looks at Dream in content, finding him a good business partner.

"Tridents do so much damage."

"You have netherite armor, you're not gonna die."

"Well, I'm not used to not dying."

Dream rolls his eyes, amused, "I mean, you *do* eat cooked food when you're down half a hunger bar."

"...Rude."

A few minutes until he receives a few blocks of glowstone and peruses more options of trade, but then he realizes he becomes so angry that he has to contain himself so far as to not break his keyboard.

"Oh—." he starts.

"What?" George asks.

"My—"

"What's wrong?"

"God."

"What? What is it?"

"You gotta be *joking*. I spent *so long* mining that wood."

Then, it is George's turn to have a laughing fit, "You got the glass bottle trade didn't you?"

Dream sighs, making no further comment, and that is enough to send George hiccuping in a frenzy of giggles. It should be noted that now, it is George who will have to contain himself to continue.

The unexpected cleric meets not just a loss in a business partner, but a pitiful life as well, from Dream's petty-filled axe. Deciding to abandon the village, as it serves no use to him now that he has time cut short, he grabs his brewing stand back and takes his leave.

The successor of the first Eye cracks its pupil open, looking around for its home, and it veers out to the ocean again. Dream finds that he's been visiting it very frequently. And so, he follows its trail and waits for it to rest its vision in the sky.

That is, if he didn't hear the all too familiar hiss of a particular mob.

He gasps, "—Oh God—!"

And in a damning explosion, his body is thrown away with rubble biting his skin. A crater sits tiredly in front of him, dirt blocks lying in shock. Dream scrambles over the creeper's flesh in the process of trying to scour for the Eye.

"Nonono...."

But alas, it has held hands with fatality. That is two eyes gone, but he has twelve handfuls powder left, thankfully. He hops in his boat and the journey on water greets him once again, hoping she can calm his exhaustion.

What a good friend.

He continues like this, and a few minutes later, the rigid iron bars filter light from the bottom of the deep sea. Swimming towards it in delight, the crowd of kelp makes way for him to pass and break through the stronghold. He listens to the moss of the portal room hush down their gossip in respect to his arrival.

The end portal, by contrast, awaits grand and zero-eyed at the top of the stairs, and Dream, relieving it from its guards, breaks the silverfish spawner. It squeaks pathetically.

His lone eye blinks up at him in gratitude, ready to rest at its eternal-born seat, and so Dream fulfills its desires.

That *is*, until the sickening bite of netherite sinks into his shoulder, and he accidentally throws it up.

"WHAT!?"

A low voice caresses Dream with dread, "Hi Dream~"

With a heavy heart and a humble to his bones, Dream hurries down the stairs and blocks the portal room's entrance, gritting his teeth so hard it might break his jaw. His lackluster bread brings him just barely any relief.

"How did you get here so quick?!"

But George can only laugh, "Where'd you go, Dream~? I'm getting your eye."

"Noo, ugh, you're so annoying."

"Ahaha~ I have it. I'm burning it."

"Don't do that."

He hears the faint hiss of a homesick entity that never got to return.

"Too late."

An annoyed hum, and the feeling of water consumes him again, accompanied by the sympathetic chirp of a dolphin.

"Dream? Where'd you go?"

"Nowhere."

"Are you still in the fortress?"

"I'm not telling you."

Another annoyed hum, but Dream ignores it in his journey back to the mesa. The sky begins to dull, and he has no bed to lay his body to rest. The soft orange of the horizon turns grey.

He has no time to think about the soft orange of the horizon turning grey, does he?

"I can't find you—is this compass broken or something?" George says.

Dream chuckles a "no."

Decaying limbs with bright eyes wiggle in the water, just waking up from a daytime nap. Thankfully, no trident threatens to interrupt his concentration. The roofs of the village wave to him their condolences as he runs for his life. Soon, a more bold, rusty orange stands out of the now navy background, and returning the dolphin his whistle of gratitude, it plunges back into the sway of seagrass.

The sand nips his feet at his revisit, curious of what his business is now. He stands atop a hill, spotting the bright lavender flickers still crying at its abandon even after he has long gone. Running to them, he wishes the dead bushes and the cacti later, letting the mouth of the Nether portal swallow him whole once again.

He is back at the sweltering ex-hideout of the surrounding netherrack and starts to make his way back to the slumbering catharsis of the fortress. Nuggets of gold, a couple magma blocks, and brown mushrooms find themselves a home in his inventory during the process. So do a bundle of nether wart.

"Oh—what? No, this compass is definitely broken. Are you cheating, Dream??"

"What? No, I'm not a cheater, George."

"It says I can't track you."

"Well, just think harder."

George makes a baffled and frustrated sound, but Dream ignores it. The distinct pattern of wine bricks show themselves soon enough, and although it is unfortunate that the spawner is no longer there, the fortress relieves him with stray Blazes. He is lucky to get out with a total of four rods until the crackle of rotten bones chase him out.

He turns to find a clique of pigmen huddled idly, admiring the view of the lava lake, or whatever they see in their godforsaken, Nickelodeon-colored hot tub of a biome. Nonchalantly, he tosses them his gold, because quite frankly, they're taking up some inventory space.

Surprisingly, a set of eight pearls roll nonchalantly on the ground and Dream internally gets irritated with himself for taking piglins for granted. He hurriedly offers more of their currency, politely demanding more, but unfortunately, all he gets is a chunk of crying obsidian.

"*Who is Cutting the Onions?*"" George observes, "What's that? Oh you're in the Nether."

A sly and cocky chuckle before he goes on, "Good luck getting back."

What a little shit.

Pieces of netherbrick, chunks of quartz, and piles of glowstone dust later, he gets the rest of his pearls, albeit he loses a bit of patience in the process. Even then, it will save him grief from finding tall, dark, and handsome men—save for George, even though he isn't tall or extravagantly dark, but he sure is handsome.

Wishing the piglins a gracious goodbye, he lets the amethyst glitter of the portal pull him to the Overworld, and familiar fresh air welcomes him back, although it is still hot. Dead bushes and cacti and terra cotta watch him boat back to the village. His journey in the sea is once again accompanied by the oscillations of kelp and seagrass, who now cheer him on.

What a bunch of opportunists.

The villagers don't bat an eye when he arrives and they regard in an alarming calmness as he collects the sugar cane that technically isn't theirs, along with a couple of carrots from their pitifully slow farms. They are silently thankful at the slaughter of a few spiders, though, and so he is gifted back a bow and a couple stacks of arrows. A golden carrot finds itself dissolving into netherwart-filtered water.

"You're *brewing* something... Interesting," George comments.

"How would you expect me to win otherwise?"

George giggles, "I don't expect you to win at all."

Dream makes a noise that somehow encompasses amusement and irritation at the same time. Not gracing it with any further thoughts, he brittles all his pearls down to eyes before taking a swig of his invisibility potion and saves his strength ones for later.

His armor is stripped from his body, and so he resumes his run back to the stronghold's home of the ocean blending with the current's flow. Schools of fish pause their learning to acknowledge him pass by, along with the wave of squids' tentacles, on the surface.

They know he is there, not from smell, but from omniscience.

Upon seeing the familiar pattern of ashen bricks, he dives down and places a magma block under him while he peers through the portal room's window of iron bars.

Only to see the sickening reappearance of a rich dark purple.

"What?" Dream mutters, "You covered it in obsidian?"

He sees a chunk of brick on the floor crumble to reveal a glowing netherite helmet.

"AHAH—Wait—you're here? Where are you?" George says, "Oh Dream~ come on, come fight me."

Dream sinks closer to the magma cube, drinking in the air it gives him and camouflaging his potion effects with its bubbles, as George's carnivorous, endearing smile almost brushes his face—he almost wishes it did.

It makes him fucking sick.

George's sickly silhouette nears the surface of the water, and Dream slinks through a hole in the wall with his diamond pickaxe in hand.

"Dream? Are you here?"

"I dunno... where are *you*?"

The block of obsidian ceases its solidity, and the Eyes of Ender blink up at him, their pupils turning into omniscient slits that are far from naive and bloodshot from contempt. He finally satiates their homesick feelings by laying them to rest on the frames, and the howl of joyful anguish echo dreadfully through the water.

"Wh—no—how are you there!?" George exclaims, "I didn't even see you! Did you go invis?"

Dream chuckles, and that is all George needs as an answer.

"You're dead," he continues, "You're actually so dead, Dream."

Putting on his armor as he sees his body start to become visible again, he lets the portal's void give its first and last hug to him. Obsidian hits his feet and pallid endstone soon meets them, too. The dragon roars her distress at his presence—what with her beastly eyes and sparks of amethyst craving the riddance of her melancholy. Her mauve towers surround her in respect, ready for Dream's challenge.

How condescending.

Right off the start are three end crystals exploded and their queen wails at their lackluster funeral. Upon George's arrival, she cheers, but only because she can kill him, too. Dream sees his repulsive silhouette bounding towards him with a silly-hearted handful of soulsand. His feet are strangely bound in iron, along with the apparent glow of an enchantment and Dream wonders how it could possibly be better than netherite.

That is, until George places soulsand under his boots and it catapults him so much faster than he expects.

"WHAT!?" Dream exclaims, to which George can only giggle.

"C'mere, Dream~ you know you can't win."

"Get away from me, George."

George grins at him, clear with malignity and desire, "I'm not leaving you, Dream."

The Ends' queen, in contrast, gives Dream some mercy, flinging him upwards to a dead crystal's pillar. Perhaps it is for her own entertainment, but Dream won't accuse anything of the sort in case she changes her mind.

An irritated noise comes from George, "Oh, you're actually so lucky I don't have a bow."

Dream, in turn, pulls out his own, and four more crystals go out in a fantastic blast. Three left, just barely out of reach. He lands down with the flow of his water bucket, meeting the sickly endstone once again.

"George, *please* leave me be."

George laughs again, bounding across his scatter of sand, "No way."

Dream's arrow manages to nip at him, just hardly slowing him down.

But that is all he needs, because the last three crystals fall silent, and collectively, all of them watch their game of cat and mouse with a very prominent hint of curiosity and omniscience.

A drink of another potion, and his iron sword fights back for once in its life.

"Ugh, you made strength, didn't you?" George mutters.

His question, however, is more visually shown than verbally answered, but regardless, their swords dance around on the pallid ground with enderman looking on their child's play like a school fight. Their empress, in equal interest, flies high above, and to add her own flair to the scuffle, venom sparks from her mouth to separate them in a magnificent crash. Dream and George both feel her fire gnaw rather uncomfortably quickly at their organs.

She begins to rest on the middle land's bedrock for her usual cycle, and Dream runs for it, taking out one of the few beds he has. George, alerted to the possibility of being caught in the explosion, pivots around from his sprint to the center with a panicked shout. The dragon takes a heavy blow from the simple grab of the blanket and beats her wings away with a few decent swipes of an iron sword, much to Dream's chagrin, because she is so tantalizingly low.

George comes bolting in, chasing Dream out of the center, and so their clash weapons begin again. A swipe to Dream's feet brings him to the ground, and the End inhabitants all gasp as George pins him there, caressing his neck with the hunger of his umber blade.

It sends him into an emotionally intoxicating asphyxia and it makes him fucking sick.

"It's over, Dream," George is so dreadfully sultry that it nearly melts him, "You're dead."

"George, lemme go—*please*—I'll—"

"You'll *what*?"

"I'll—I—you—"

"Spit it out, Dream," venom drips insidiously from the grin slit on George's face.

"I'll let you marry me."

And like that, George's malevolent and playful smile falters. His skeleton turns hesitant. The End leans in closer to listen. George is at a loss for words.

"... You..."

"I said, I'll let you m—"

"I heard what you said."

A tense pause, and the sickening shriek of netherite pitting itself into the endstone is so deafeningly loud that Dream cannot help but flinch.

George continues, "Just finish it."

Dream, although shakingly, readies his bow and the dragon accepts her fate, deciding that it is well-earned. In a phantasmagorical caterwaul, the flicker of light rains down its explosion of luminescent, lime droplets, of which Dream nearly emotionally rejects. They ignore his feelings, preferring to melt into his skin anyway.

He laughs.

George scoffs, "I hate you so much."

"Wh—you wanted to marry me."

"Shut up."

The scrape of metal echoes through the now bustling End, and Dream turns to see George walking away.

A smug smile spreads on his face, "Where are you going, George?"



"I," he starts, turning away, "I'm going to jump out of here."

"What? No—come through the portal with me," Dream chases after him, their game of cat and mouse reversed.

Only now, it's not a game anymore.

Dream gives George a hug that is both apologetic and arrogant, "C'mon."

"Fine."

They let the credits run their cycle, and Dream's back hits the mellow grass with a soft welcome. It is the one time he is not sickened by it.

What he *is* sickened by, though, is the fact that George doesn't appear beside him.

"George? Where are you?"

The soft thud on the ground is indicative of his presence.

"My bed was set at the portal room," George dusts himself off.

Dream hums in understanding, and a calm silence falls between them.

"That soul speed strat was impressive," Dream comments.

"Only because I got lucky with the piglin trades. I watched a benex speedrun," George notes, then chuckles, "Maybe you should try for the 1.16 record."

Dream tilts his head in thought, enlightened by the possibility, "Maybe."

Another bit of silence, then George sighs.

"Ugh, you're so annoying. I can't believe you won."

A shit eating smile comes from Dream, "I mean, to be fair, I dealt a good trade."

George shakes his head and rolls his eyes, giggling:

"What is wrong with you?"

-

Dream's house is cozy, or technically, it is *their* house now—a domesticated bliss in their circle of a cesspool of love. Patches lies indefinitely on the couch with them, and George fiddles absentmindedly with the bold metal encompassing Dream's finger along with his own. His thumb runs over delicate intonation of skin over prominent veins.

He looks up to Dream's nonchalant face, "You're such an idiot, you know that, right?"

Dream leaves the question without a response, unwilling to deny or confirm his statement, but it is all that they both need as an answer. Instead, Dream tilts George's head up with a simple thumb.

And for the first time, a kiss is dealt not with the lover letter of an axe or a sword, but with lips.

Their game of cat and mouse is laid to rest.

## Chapter End Notes

i actually did watch a realbenex speedrun for these strats AND calculate how many logs trade for how many sticks trade for how many emeralds(ignore upcharge/discounts) i do so much research for this fic on GOD why do i do this.

# Minecraft Manhunt, But We Start In The Nether

## Chapter Summary

this fic took me long bc i had to do some 1.16 research Forgive me

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Alright, run the command, George."

By now, Dream has already been welcomed by the forest and gotten a decent supply of wood. However, this time, it radiates a cool hue instead of the usual brown he is used to. Its logs teem with activity as veins of light snake up its ridges of stem. Shroomlights stare down at him, wondering how he'll get accustomed to the world that they live in.

The lodestone encodes itself into his core, and he feels George's compass, lovingly named "Dream," point towards him. The respawn anchor next to George is set to infinity instead of the supposed four.

"Oh, what—you're already gone," George says.

Dream giggles, and George rolls his eyes.

"You always do this."

"And *you* fall for it every time."

"I don't 'fall' for it, you just go when you want to."

"I mean, I have to get away *somehow*."

"You're dead either way."

"*Right*..." drawls a sarcastic response.

"Oh, there you are."

Dream turns to see George's familiar silhouette playfully bounding towards him, ready for a fist fight that he can risk dying in. An endearing punch sends Dream's face to the side and he tastes the only kind of iron he'll probably get for a long while.

You know, the red kind.

He returns the punch and George snaps his head back in shocked pain, clutching a bloody nose.

"Ow, what is wrong with you?" he giggles.

All Dream can do is laugh, running away and towering up on a warped tree, "*You're* the one hitting me."

"You're so annoying—get down here," George continues, only to be abruptly stopped, "Wait, what—oh, no—"

And comes along an enderman gaping its jaw to let out an anguished cry, pummeling him into oblivion.

"I swear I didn't look at you, oh my God," his body tints red—though it's not like he can see it—but he bites the nylium all the same, "No! That is so—ugh."

Dream smiles with a smug "yay" at his hunter's demise. He takes note of the enderman in a conditional solidarity—careful not to look directly at him—unwilling to fight him at a stage so early. For now, it is just one tall, dark, and handsome man appreciating another.

He makes his set of wooden tools, irritated that the Nether has nothing more to offer in a close proximity. Aquamarine sprouts crawl in curiosity, and so does the occasional and distant croak of other endermen, or maybe their ghosts. The forest creaks eerily, echoing with a static of hollow emotions—empty and busy at the same time.

An anomaly to the rest of its warm-colored home.

Squinting around, he is only met with more royal blue fog, since, well, they don't have Optifine for this version yet.

He begins supplying himself with more wood in addition to some twisted vines. Towering up to an overhang, little deposits of gold poke their eyes at him, and so a measly wooden pickaxe finds itself in his hands. The ore is torn down and nuggets sit themselves at home in his inventory, soon to be made into gold boots. They feel light on his feet—a contrast to its dense Overworld counterpart. He will need them for integrating into Piglin society later.

But what a shame it is that the gold on both Dream and George's ring fingers do not suffice already.

He gathers enough gold for a pickaxe, and it'll probably be the only gold tool he'll have. His sword and his axe are blue, but they don't shine turquoise like he is used to. Instead, soft patterns engrave themselves into its wood, dampening it to a deep and ironically earthy azure.

Upon travelling further, the ground loses its teal texture and turns to its companion, regular netherrack. The periodic teeth of milky quartz pokes its canines out of the ground, along with crowds of red and brown mushrooms. They find a purpose as his only source of food for now, and for a long time in a while, the Nether provides him something to eat instead of the other way around.

He can't remember when he had stew last—it'll be something he'll have to get used to, especially when the Nether calls itself a begrudging home to him.

The flesh under his feet is soon interrupted by brick, and although it is not in the maroon color he would prefer, it is still a valuable encounter. His thought process is also interrupted by a message in the chat—*[Stone Age]*, to be exact.

"What!? You got stone already??" Dream sasses.

And all George can do is giggle, "Should've explored a little more, huh?"

Dream rolls his eyes, "Whatever."

He peers around the uneven collection of blackstone brick and basalt, searching for the bright

contrast of a tempting butterscotch gold. Hopefully, they will be accompanied by some chests. Piglins around him grunt their indifference, snorting a welcome apathy and bustling with their strange claws fiddling on their swords and crossbows and measly pieces of armor.

Well, he probably shouldn't call them measly, since he barely has anything himself.

Tiny piglins circle around his feet in a naive playfulness, and Dream reminds himself that domesticity is an illusion, or at least, for now it is. He wonders how it will balance their game of cat and mouse. His eyes shift over to the honey-colored metal around his finger and he concludes that his sense of longing will experience the same taste eventually.

He just needs to be patient, is all.

"Oh—you're in a bastion..." George comments.

Dream says nothing, preferring to take out his crafting table and spare a handful of nuggets. Careful not to have it stolen by rebellious children, he crafts a gold ingot and lets one of their supervisors decide its value. They inspect the chunk of metal as equally as carefully, maybe even with a tint of envy and perhaps even sniffing it to see if it really does come close to their version of honey.

After a soft claw grazes its surface, they store it away and out comes several stretches of leather. It is decent enough, and so he makes a chestplate out of it. Another bar of gold is up for a trade, and in return he is given a multitude of strings. Contrary to popular belief, it is exactly what he needs.

Going back to his crafting table, he repurposes the string into wool, and the wool just barely manages itself into a bed. His feet soon meet the edge of a blackstone ledge, and he reminds himself why he has a fear of heights. If George wasn't there to maim his pride, he probably would be screaming just as loud as he does.

How that man had the gall to jump straight down to the middle that one time was a mystery to him, and he supposes it still is.

Regardless and somehow through game mechanics, a bed finds itself in his hands and he jumps down a floor, using it to soften his fall. Not exactly MLG, but enough to halve his fall damage, and he is extremely careful not to trigger its sleeping mechanic.

He is fully aware of how that would go.

Finally reaching the bottom, the blackstone bricks greet him with silence in contrast to the bubbling mote of lava surrounding the bastion's core. The bed is placed down in the center and he blocks off any potential lava spots that items might eventually die to. It shields itself with a spare and sturdy block of basalt, and with the attempt of futile sleep, a crater bashes into the ground with a terrifying roar and a slight knockback. Fires crackle their disorientated and unnatural flames as Dream looks around for any useful loots. He hisses out a few fires on his glance around.

A few blocks of gold lie idle on the ground, itemized from the explosion. When Dream picks it up, nothing changes about the Piglins' attitude—they accept him cleanly. Diamond leggings also sit lonely, looking for a new owner, and Dream concludes that it will be him.

"Diamond armor???" George sasses, "How?"

But Dream can only giggle, making his now giant supply of dandelion metal into ingots. Snorts of interest are music to his ears when he holds one up, and bridging over to the main halls of the bastion, the game centers itself around patience one again. One has the audacity to sniff the gold on

his finger, and Dream retracts his hand, a little offended.

Upon waiting, he mines any raw blackstone to make himself stone tools, and the wooden azure stores itself in the back of his inventory in case he needs them later.

A fire charge later and aimless flames laugh at his growing exhaustion.

"Dream, seriously—how did you get the stuff, like, shouldn't you be dead already?"

"I'm not telling you."

"Ok, fine then."

An [*Acquiring Hardware*] advancement pops in the messages, and Dream does a double take.

"What—iron already??"

"You have diamond armor, idiot."

Well, he is not wrong about that. He turns back to the piglin to see a delightful orange bottle in its claws—a fire resistance potion—and he takes its merigold juice in gratitude. Chunks of crying obsidian later and he finds himself missing the sun, despite being used to the heat most of the time.

"Oh, you must be trading," comments George.

Dream rolls his eyes. What a ravenclaw—whatever that is. Handfuls of glowstone dust and he hears the angry shriek of an axe sink its teeth into the ground.

"What!?"

He turns, expecting it to be George, instinctively stabs at its direction. However, it is none other than a Piglin brute, and the rest of their friends turn in shock to his betrayal. Their formerly empty eyes now distort angrily and the chorus of enraged growls echo through their society. A grip—whose ever it is—tightens on Dream's breath.

"Holy Mother of—" he loses the grip on his words in panic, "—God!"

Realizing that he has confirmed himself a true outsider, there is no hesitation as Dream scrambles to confine himself into a wall. Their distressed cries vibrate the blocks he so desperately built up.

"What happened?" George shows amused concern.

"Nothing, nothing... Oh my... ba-*Jesus*."

"What?" laughs George.

"Shut up."

He continues mining through the wall frequently sipping on a bowl of mushroom stew and doing everything to savor the taste. Soon, the familiar flesh of netherrack proves guilty in his eyes, especially for putting him through all that. Nonetheless, he welcomes it back, and upon travelling further, the smell of ghostly sulfur breathes into his ears with a tint of blue gloom. Bones around him rattle their hostility, but he's thankful that they are the kind that wield bows instead of swords. The soul sand valley's winds whisper in ambient mourning, but whether it is for Dream or themselves is a mystery.

Its periodic and distorted howls tell him that it is both.

As he travels through, the agonized soil lazily gnaws at his feet, whining and secreting decay every time he takes a step. The eager faces on the sand beckon him with lovely lies to join their long bygone burdens in a grand party.

What a bunch of bootlickers.

The terrain crawls around him—it is something obviously unearthly, and not that the way it is living, but how it is formed. The occasional slumber of fossils wave their ribs as he passes by, and he wonders how long it will be until he lies with them. Not only that, but the reverberation of wails are indicative of a place that is physically and emotionally large and empty at the same time.

Thankfully, the shadow of a maroon bridge interrupts the unapologetic breeze, and Dream internally says goodbye to the crackle of blue fire—or for at least a little while.

The fortress juts out of sand half buried and half desperate for whatever reason that Dream does not bother to figure out. From the ledge, he manages to break out of the soul soil's attachment to him and bridges out to the recognizable repetition of burgundy bricks. It clunks under his feet—something he'll have to get used to, as opposed to its old sounds.

Venturing further into its vacant hallways, the distant rattles of decaying bones catch his ear, but the only thing he can do is have the desperate and savory taste of mushroom stew mellow his tension. Turning around a few corners reveals the verbatim of fences with the core cage of a spawner and Dream's face lights up, careful not to make a sound.

Four blazes sigh to him their melancholy, returning him with three rods after he slays them.

"Ugh—what? You found a spawner already?" George mumbles, "I didn't even see that you got in a fortress."

"Well," Dream chuckles, "You better hurry up, then."

"Shut up, this compass is broken."

"No, it isn't," Dream assures, "You're just bad—we sat down and coded the lodestone together."

Three blazes breathe heavily and give him one rod—a decent drop rate, but it could be better.

"Fine, yeah—I've been playing this game for nine years and I'm still awful at it, okay? Where'd you go?"

Two blaze rods and a hint of concern nags at Dream to speak a little more, "What—no, I'm joking, George. You're not bad; you just whine a lot."

"I *am* bad, Dream. You're just... so nimble. And every time I try to follow you around I end up dying because I'm clumsy."

"George, stop that," a pout can be heard in Dream's voice, and one more blaze rod renders his visit finished, "You're a good player—I promise."

"You... promise?" It sounds like he finds the sentiment quite odd.

"Well, yeah."

The shriek of an iron sword threatens to carve a saccharine smile on his body, followed by an

advancement from its owner.

"Good," George growls lowly, looking up at him with a grotesque grin.

"What!?" Dream steps back with a rather betrayed expression, "You little—where'd you even get iron?"

Their swords dance with a sly cry every time they clash until Dream determines that his stick of stone will not last for their fight. The bricks crunch under his feet as he pivots away with everything to lose.

"Dream~" George taunts sweetly, "Come back here."

"You're such a liar—how did I fall for that?"

"I didn't lie about anything, technically."

"Oh, shut up. You're so annoying."

"What happened to promising that I was a good player?"

"I said you're *annoying*, not a bad player."

George giggles, and the echo of their feet ringing metal through the fortress fills their silence. The only difference is that George's iron boots—who are encompassed with a suspicious glow—sound heavy on the brick in contrast to Dream's golden ones, and the pattern of them running creates a sickly tune.

"If you don't come here right now," George jokes, "I'm divorcing you."

Dream rolls his eyes, "What? You're so stupid."

The only response he receives is more giggles.

They inevitably reach the end of their chase as the fortress has stretched its merciful arms as long as it can and it transfers Dream to the unforgiving heat of a lava lake below. A stab to his side parts him down the edge endearingly before he takes out and chugs on his fire resistance potion.

"Ahaha~ you're so dead, Dream," George singsongs, "You're actually so dead."

He splats awkwardly in the now warm sludge and it threatens to consume him whole. Thankfully, he knows how to swim, albeit the liquid is thick with an otherworldly make-up of molten rock. It slides around him like oil, and upon his breach, he grimaces at the taste of metal, but whether it is from the lava or from the way he sinks his teeth into the insides of his cheeks is a mystery to him.

Above him, George's expression turns into that of a disgruntled face. Like a fool, Dream smiles slyly.

"Aw, c'mon, George," he laughs, "You wanna join me? It's nice and hot."

But then, George wears a sly smile of his own and the familiar, sickly silhouette of another orange bottle appears in his hand and Dream hopes he's a better swimmer.

*Ugh.*

The savory clementine potion spills over George's body and, like a ragdoll, he plummets down to



their Nickelodeon-colored hot tub with an exciting crash, and so the both of them struggle against the Nether's saliva.

"Leave me alone, George!"

"No, c'mere—you said you wanted me to join you," George teases.

"I didn't realize you had a fire res potion, too."

"You're not the only one trading with piglins."

"I realize that."

The shore of a crimson forest peaks out of the bright lake and the more or less indifferent piglins vacationing there show no signs of helping. Dream's arms grow tired, but he crocodiles his way toward the collection of magma blocks all while narrowly dodging George's sword.

"Oh, what—how are you so quick?" George complains.

"I actually go outside, George," he mutters sarcastically.

"And? I do, too."

"Yeah, right."

He accepts the scarlet nylium with relief, now happy to hop across a solid ground under his feet. The feeling of iron biting his ankles makes him sprint a little more frantically.

"George! Let me be!"

"No—I'm not letting you go~"

The growls of nearby hoglins alert him to the fact that he is in more trouble than he intends. Giant fungi watch entertained by their chase pass by them and they let their sorrowful weeping vines cry for a satisfying ending. Dream, recognizing this, finds a rather long stretch of vegetation and uses it to escape upwards. He hears George mutter under his breath, annoyed, but still feels the white of iron tint red at his leg.

He reaches the top of the vine and jumps down to another formation of netherrack, cutting off the rest of the weeping vines and watching them flow their tears down.

A recognizable gasp and a sound indicative of the decrease in hearts—he *must* be low.

Dream takes out his batch of the red vines' blue counterpart and MLGs down. George, in turn, smiles fake with a panic.

"Oh George~"

"Oh my God."

The sound of netherrack shuffling clumsily rings through the forest's stems.

"C'mon, Dream—we can talk about this."

"What? With a divorce?"

The pearly whites of nether quartz open their jaws with hunger.

"Dream, we don't have to do this, okay? I was joking about the divorce."

"I know that."

Their fire resistance has worn off and their hot pursuit turns into a cold stop as George comes to a dead end. He fruitlessly builds up only to be knocked down by Dream's now intimidating blackstone sword. The unappeasable wall digs into George's back as he tries to avoid the sickening blade pointed at his neck.

"Dream. Let me be."

"Wow..." Dream shakes his head in fake shame at the reversal of their game of cat and mouse and leans in close to his ear, "I thought you were the one hunting me."

George rolls his eyes, "Ugh, you always do this."

"I wouldn't say '*always*'," Dream chuckles, "I just find the opportunity a lot."

"Whatever," George pouts, "Fine, you can kill me."

"You're gonna go out like that? You know how long it's gonna take you to come back?"

"...No. Maybe— isn't that the goal?"

"Come on, at least try and fight back. I'll let you."

The hilt of George's sword comes to tilt Dream's chin more towards him. Lava quiets its bubbling and the creak of the forest ceases. Pink particles slow their erratic pace in the air. Dream does not protest, preferring to see it out with an amused look.

"Really?" George asks.

"Maybe."

"You're lying."

"I'm not."

George hums, turning Dream's head to meet him with a sickeningly sweet kiss, and Dream reciprocates, melting in with the soft relaxation of his ashen blade. The rosy netherrack ceases its pulse to give them a moment.

That is, until metal iron pierces through its fleshy counterpart and Dream staggers back with a rather concerning gash in his abdomen. He looks up with an emptiness in his heart slot and an expression of shock, and so do the weeping vines around them.

"What!?! You—," Dream loses his words, "I—oh you little... *muffinhead*."

He hears George's hiccup of laughter turn into loud guffaws. He's probably in tears now.

"I got you!! Yesss," George continues his assertion of triumph.

Meanwhile, Dream's back hits the syrupy cerulean of warped nylium. He is still in shock.

"George! That's cheating."

"No, it isn't."

He feels the nylium bend to George's weight upon his teleportation.

"Well, it was *mean* to say the least."

George comes over to sit next to his head, "I know."

"I—no, that doesn't count."

"What—I *killed* you. That totally counts."

"Yeah, because you distracted me."

"That was the plan! You know I can't get you 1v1."

"So you admit you're a bad player."

"I did. And you said I wasn't. And then I killed you."

Dream turns his head with an irritated expression and crosses his arms, "Ugh. I hate you."

"No, you don't."

"Shut. Up."

George giggles, "Make me."

Dream looks back up at him, now with an arrogant smile, "Fine."

He pulls George's head down for another kiss, making him lose a little bit of balance before he steadies himself with his hands. The sprouts of nylium bend in a heartfelt tilt and the Nether softens its echoes to let them have their fun. George pulls away, and Dream's arrogant smile becomes even more sickening to him.

"Well? Did I shut you up?" he says.

And George does not answer, preferring to stab him again with an iron sword. Dream giggles along.

## Chapter End Notes

if this actually ends up being a video i think i will claim the right to be called god. i am  
maniFESTINNGG OKAY OKAY LETS GO LETS MANIFEST THIS CHALLENGE

# Minecraft Manhunt, But We Start In The Nether (Again)

## Chapter Summary

new strats are being Thought

## Chapter Notes

im waiting for that nether manhunt upload sir. im being so patient <3 hurry up <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The pillars of basalt and blackstone crackle dryly at George who tries desperately not to sneeze at the dust nipping at his nose in case its echoes travel farther than the eye can see. Distant cries of Ghasts murmur their sorrows, but none show up in sight and George concludes that it is perhaps the sound of their ghosts. He whips his head around to the empty thud of the deltas coughing on its own lava.

“Where’d you go, George?” Dream says, more irritated than hungry, “This biome sucks.”

“I know.”

“So you went here just to bother me? You know it’s just gonna kill you, too, right?”

“Maybe.”

George is careful not to jump around so recklessly—his attempt at agility is not as well-defined as he hopes to be and his previous passage through a crimson forest proves it. Perhaps he’ll have to have Dream teach him after they once again skitter around in their game of cat and mouse.

Cliques of magma blocks threaten to have a taste of his feet as he continues through the wasteland of rock and he absentmindedly fiddles with his bundle of sticks and spectral arrows. He had gotten them from a bastion earlier, and he’s still recovering from the wounds its hoglins made on his stomach. With that being stated, he carefully digs a cube into the basalt’s flesh and blocks it off. The soul sand from a previous encounter with a stray piglin comes in handy when he makes a campfire and cooks what is likely akin to a raw porkchop. The flame smells sour and bitter at the same time, but it will have to suffice with the savory taste of mushroom stew. It comes hauntingly clear that he misses the taste of apples.

“Dream?”

“What?”

“It’s so hot here.”

“We’re in the *Nether*, George—what do you expect?”

“I can still complain.”

Dream chuckles, “You’re so stupid.”

The blue fire’s hisses alert him to the fact that some of his pork chops have finished their round, and so he takes a bite out of the tangy flesh. It tastes exceedingly rich, yet also simultaneously alien, but whether it is from the soul fire or the fact that it is hoglin meat is a mystery.

He wouldn’t know—he just knows how to make steak.

On the rest of his wait, his hand runs over the ridges of a block of crying obsidian, hoping to calm his nerves. However, its whimpers do the exact opposite as it cries out for him to comfort it instead.

How pitiful.

It returns into the back of his inventory—he is not here for a weeping festival. He is here to survive.

Wiping its tears away on the wall, it glows an unsettling and violent violet. He takes the rest of his food and the nimble movement of a familiar name zips past his eyes. A disgruntled sigh from its owner bounces off the cracks of blackstone.

“Ugh, why can’t I find you?” mutters Dream.

And so George is quick to craft a bow and dig out of his confines.

“Wait—what was that sound— oh, there you are,” a gasp, “You have a bow!?”

With the pull of a string, the honey-esque tip of an arrow rips through the air and tastes the sour of lime. It catches itself on Dream’s arm, and it knocks him off of his throne of a pathetic pillar of rock. His new glow is soon to be meshed in with a pit of lava’s exceptionally bright hunger and George can see it through the delta’s attempts to hide his downfall, no matter how hard they try.

“WHAT—Nononno—please, *please*—”

The sickly silhouette, which now takes on a white color, frantically jumps around in a futile attempt to outlive its fire, but the message in chat is enough to bring George relief, and the simultaneous shouting of triumph and loss crashes even louder through the basalt’s bodies.

“What!? Oh, come *on*,” Dream complains.

His only response, however, is the silly-hearted giggle from George as Dream’s small sprinkle of former experience twinkle towards his feet when he approaches the deathbed. The scatter of items now gravitate and show up to his inventory. It is not too much, to say the least, save for the small clumps of gold lying idle on the magma blocks.

Pebbles crumble their usual chatter beneath his feet as George moves on in whatever direction is possible and tries to ignore the dryness in his breath. If thirst were in the game’s mechanics, both of them would surely be dead by now. The nonchalant bounce of magma cubes prove bothersome to his ears and he notes that he envies them for their ability to survive in this rather dreadful biome. Thankfully, the presence of their families ebb away as the ashes darken away to an indigo fog.

The teal grass tickles his boots, nibbling away at the butterscotch metal in hopes of tasting what it looks like. Warped trees and dark, handsome men tower over him, becoming a tall crowd that he is especially careful as not to glance up to even when his curiosity urges him. A condescending crowd of burgundy bricks lay buried in a hill, and George finds relief in them, though he knows

they'll annoy him very quickly. He takes a souvenir of fungi in case he needs them

"Oh, what?" Dream comments, "You're at a fortress?"

"I mean, it's not like there is a message in the chat that says it."

Dream huffs an amused breath, "Okay, shut up."

The tunnel gapes hollow in its slumber, cracking its eye open at the repetition of metal clashing on metal that George's footsteps make. An intersection leads to nowhere but patches of glowstone that shine their already bright puppy eyes in hopes that it will deter him. Unfortunately, this does not do much, because the sharp sound of glass shrieking hits the floor as he sticks his hand in to collect its bright dust, and quite a lot of it—a little more than sixteen or so handfuls.

The grunt of a zombified piglin makes him freeze, and the odor of rotten flesh makes him flinch even more. He looks at the undead creature with an obvious expression of contempt, because quite frankly, the interruption was very rude. However, it does not care, staring blank into his eyes and continuing its grumbles in whatever language it now speaks. George is specifically careful not to glare at its sword too much. For him, it may be out of fear, but as for the piglin, it'll get stingy in the way it might think George will steal it. Because of this, he has the strongest urge to jab it, but refrains.

And he pities and fears the fool who doesn't refrain—that specific person being Dream.

Putting away his thoughts to search, the tunnels of the fortress lead him to stairs and the familiar pattern of a lava well in the middle of the room. He travels into the path opposite of the incline, and he's met with walls of soulsand breathing their distress in his ears. The whispers of a nearby Blaze does the same, though it is more angry than sad. Perhaps this is the reason it does not drop a rod when George slays it, but hopefully the sound of a spawner to his left will give him some mercy.

Three Blazes become two rods become four handfuls of powder, and he is wary not to mix them up with his glowstone.

"'Into Fire' already? Jeez, slow down, George."

"What? *You* slow down."

Four Blazes become three rods become six wisps of orange—though it is not like he can see it—and he is alerted to the fact that he is not the only player in the fortress.

"Aw, c'mon, George," Dream teases, "Come back—I want to see you."

"I don't."

Dream makes a baffled sound, though he really shouldn't be surprised, "Rude."

Two Blazes become two rods become four mouthfuls of clementine dust, and the usually mysterious nametag of his friend and rival and lover alarmingly across the walls.

"Oh, George~" he says, "Don't you know how much I miss you?"

George scampers away with a nervous yet snappy response, appreciative of the fortress's merciful drop rate.

“No.”

“You should.”

George turns the corner, finding some gold and a saddle in a chest. He stuffs them in his inventory, going around even more corners until the fortress’s veins have given him enough mercy. The crumble of netherrack is a relief to his ears—just as always, he knew he’d get annoyed of netherbrick very quickly.

He scales down a shore where piglins sit idle and finds solace in the crunch of gravel beneath his feet. Striders bound in content across the hot beach, never missing the sun and never missing the moon because, well, they’ve never seen them, and George reminds himself that this world is not for him instead of offering pity to its inhabitants. That being said, he attaches a warped fungi to a piece of string, and the piece of string to a stick. One of them warbles its naive curiosity and gravitates towards the hand that pets her.

A friend. He decides to call her “Baby.”

Taking out his stack of gold, the nether waste’s snorting population perks their heads up in interest. Some clunk their way to him, stumbling a little dumbly on the gravel. Offering an ingot, his game of cat and mouse turns to a game of patience.

Two ingots become a few chunks of soulsand, along with three blocks of crying obsidian, and George is taken out of his own concentration by the sound of Dream’s voice.

“Oh, Georgie!”

George laughs, “What?”

Three ingots become six pearls, a patch of glowstone dust, and pieces of nether brick. For some reason he is relieved to hear Dream’s voice. He doesn’t have time to be relieved by Dream’s voice.

“I have a surprise for you.”

“Well, I don’t want it.”

Two ingots become strands of string and stretches of leather. Baby sits beside him, cricketing her understanding and nudging her head accordingly.

“You were supposed to ask what it was,” says Dream.

“Okay, fine. What is it?”

“I’m not telling you,” Dream giggles stupidly.

George huffs an annoyed breath, “Then why’d you ask me to ask you what it was?”

“Because it’s a surprise.”

“You’re so annoying.”

Dream laughs and George rolls his eyes.

Three ingots become a chunk of iron nuggets, a couple of fire charges, and soul speed enchanted golden boots. George is getting impatient, but he appreciates the iron—it is enough to make a helmet, and so he does.

“Suit up?” Dream comments, “Bet it isn’t even enough for boots.”

“Well, you’ll see.”

Two ingots become seven pearls and more crying obsidian—George silently yells “pog”. He should really stop doing that.

“Oh, it’s a helmet!”

“Wait, what?!”

George’s head snaps around to see Dream’s sickly silhouette wolfing towards him with a sense of desire that is murderous and insatiable and endearing all the same.

“C’mere, George!”

“Leave me alone, Dream. Please.”

“I know you miss me, George.”

George takes out his bow, stretching the string taut with a spectral arrow. Breathing shakily, he releases it and the golden tip just barely grazes Dream’s cheek, sparking his figure with a tiny glow. George readies another one.

“Oh, come on, you can do better than that.”

“Shut up, okay? I’m trying to hit you.”

“Good luck.”

“I won’t need it.”

“Yes, you will.”

It turns out George does, in fact, need that luck, because the arrow bites the eye of a sorry zombified piglin and he no longer pities the fool who restrains hitting them for the fun of it.

Instead, it is himself, to which Dream lets out a mocking guffaw.

“Oh. My. God.” George says.

“Yes!!” laughs Dream, “Get him! Go get him!”

George tightens a saddle on Baby as most, if not all, of the glints of golden swords tilt their blades towards him, the eyes of their owners flashing with a hivemind anger along with the chorus of their enraged cries. His friend crows in panic, seeing as the shore is blocked and the only way to go is away from her home of lava.

He attempts a desperate encouragement, “C’mon, you can make it!”

Dream chuckles, “No, you can’t.”

Baby scrambles her best to avoid the wave of aggravated war pigs with her cold frown and shivering legs. They both honestly should be dead by now.

But by sheer accident and the brilliant turn of game mechanics, Baby’s foot squishes grotesquely



on a baby zombie piglin's head, and so forth on top of an adult. George, or rather, his strider, is waddling on the now ill-equipped army, and it is not that she knows how, but more that George has directed her to by mistake.

“What is happening—oh my God,” George starts to laugh.

“What!? How are you doing that!?”

“Dream! Look! I'm crowd surfing!”

Dream inevitably laughs as well, but with it is a grit of the teeth of frustration, “What?? They can do that?!”

“Apparently?”

The piglins snort under George and their blades are too short to reach—he is appreciative that his friend is shielding him from such a mass. She nibbles a little more on her treat and he is in a life's debt.

They stand at the edge of a cliff, and Dream rounds closer. The bubbles of lava grumble hauntingly louder in George's ears.

“Ugh, fine,” Dream pulls out a crossbow, “This is gonna be a little risky.”

And likewise, it is, but his aim proves accurate and the arrow pierces right at the strider's cheek, dampening her frown with a dark ooze of what is likely her blood.

“What!? No—don't hurt her,” George frowns.

Dream growls lowly, readying another, “You should have had the same attitude to me.”

Baby warbles her pain, and they are knocked down their makeshift pyramid into the starving lake of heat.

“No—Baby, are you okay?!”

She chirps unfazed, because striders don't take fall damage on lava. However, her expression is still sour from the bite of a couple arrows, and George feeds her a treat accordingly. The wounds heal and her rocky scales turn to their natural red—it's not like George can tell, but it is indicated by a relieved chitter.

“Baby?” Dream sasses, “What?”

“That's her name!” justifies George.

“That is the cheesiest name I've ever heard.”

“What else am I gonna name her? ‘Robert’?”

“I bet you were thinking about it.”

A guilty pause until George answers.

“...You're not wrong.”

They scamper off as Dream stands at the edge of the cliff, contrasting Baby's usual straight face

with a hungry stare.

“Ugh, you’re gonna be so far away now,” he sighs, and his only reply is a nervous giggle.

George watches Dream turn back elsewhere, perhaps getting more supplies, or hopelessly searching for a saddle of his own. Regardless, he pats Baby with a shaky hand, fiddling with its whisker-like hairs to mellow his tension. She doesn’t mind at all.

The Nether fills the silence—groans encompassed in rot and creaks akin to the dragon’s roar herself. If he’s good enough, he’ll get to hear it in person.

As he continues, streams of lava condescend from the ceiling, gurgling their heat with superiority. Baby does not take a notice, merely following aimlessly with the blue fungi in front of her.

“I despise you for this. You know that, right?” Dream says.

George smiles, “You still love me, though.”

Dream dismisses the sentiment rather rudely, “Shut up.... this is like.. A boat fight except I don’t have a boat.”

“Dream with no boat,” George mumbles to himself, amused, “Boat with legs... Boat with no legs.”

“You can’t even make boats with this type of wood, can you? No.. you can’t.”

“You wouldn’t even be able to use them on the lava, idiot.”

“Okay, whatever. You are dead. You are so dead.”

George rolls his eyes, “We’ll see.”

Baby’s trill alerts him to the presence of a comfortable gulf to rest on, along with the dark contrast of a half-finished portal.

“Ohh... inch resting,” he mumbles.

“Inch resting? What’s so ‘inch resting’?” Dream sasses.

“Nothing. You’ll see.”

“I’ll see, huh?”

George’s feet rest on polished blackstone brick and he looks around to greet again the lonely walls of netherrack. As he gives Baby one last treat, she purrs delightfully and shakes her saddle loose. He is sad to part with her, but it’s for the best—she is not suited for the Overworld and the Overworld is not suited for her. Dream has a long way to go, so she supposes she’ll take a break on the magma blocks before fleeing.

George just hopes she’ll make it far.

He heads toward the broken gate, its only chunks of crying obsidian thankfully resting on its corners. Creaking the chest open, he finds the remainder of the regular obsidian and a few bits of iron. Not enough for anything, really, but he decides he’ll keep it anyway.

Filling in the rest of the portal, he takes his fire charge and sets it alight. It howls purple with fresh air—finally a hint of wind without the stench of rot or dying sand or fungi beyond the human’s

understanding. With a last goodbye to Baby, he lets the lilac shimmers gnaw him through, and the familiarity of stone and iron reciprocate his greeting like an old friend.

He expected the blue sky, but the coolness of a cave works just as fine. Perfect, even.

Taking out a crafting bench, or rather, probably making a new one, he lays out his glowstone and his crying obsidian for a respawn anchor. A smile carves itself on his face—cruel, but necessary. It is not like Dream hasn't done the same, either.

“...Hey, Dream~”

“What?”

“I have a surprise for you.”

“So now *I* get a surprise, huh?”

“Something like that.”

“What's that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing.”

Delving a little further into the cave, George creates a sharp turn and digs himself into a corner. He places his respawn anchor down just out of sight, shielding himself with a blackstone block just in front of him. His spare glowstone comes in handy as it seeps dreadfully into its cracks, relieving its crying obsidian's portions of its sorrows, or at least, just as long as it lives. A faint glow flickers as it comes to life and the pool of strange amethyst swirl their mysteries, reverberating its laugh through its crackled lungs and whistling its pulse, similar to that of a whale's cry, as George puts more glowstone in for no other reason at all than liking the sound it makes.

He doesn't bother to wonder what it means.

“Oh—there's your portal. Where's Baby? Did you take her with you?” says Dream.

“No.”

*How'd he get there so fast?*

“Well, that's good, I guess,” Dream's tone is rather strangely uplifting.

“Why?”

“I would've killed her.”

“I wouldn't be surprised. She waddled away.”

Dream laughs, “Till the very next day.”

“There's no day in the Nether, Dream.”

“Shut up, you could have at least sung along.”

“Well, it's too late, now, isn't it.”

Dream mocks with a fake British accent, the Floridian fucker, “Too late now, innit, George?”

“That’s not even my accent.”

“I know.”

Through the wall, George eyes the lonely nametag that appears accompanied by the howl of the portal.

“Oh, what—you spawned in a cave,” Dream says.

George grins, “Did I?”

“Shut up, I know you did,” Dream dismisses, mumbling just barely, “It’s this way…”

George readies his hand on the anchor.

“What? What’s thi—”

And in a brilliant explosion of fire and triumph, the respawn anchor lets out an anguished caterwaul and George laughs maniacally, though probably brought down about an equal amount of hearts.

“Happy one month anniversary, Dream!”

Dream, somehow still alive, strands bruised and shocked, clutching his shield just a little too late.

“Oh God,” he barely breathes, pivoting on the hot cobble.

“What?! How are you still alive?!” exclaims a rather impressed George, though it’s not that he’ll admit it out loud.

He puts on his golden boots, who radiate a suspicious glow, and takes out a measly, but sufficient slot of soul sand, as Dream scampers away. Pearly whites cut their presence on George’s face, smiling saccharine as he realizes that their game of cat and mouse is now reversed.

“George! Leave me alone!”

“No way—c’mere Dreamie!”

They scuffle out of the fire, and the cave tilts downwards. The sand that George places below him cheers him on, sparking blue and hushing their triumph in escape from their dreadful world. The vein of stone is relatively quiet, save for the nonexistent, unnecessary clang of a minecart and the pitiful patter of their feet.

“Let me be, George!”

“Oh, c’mon you’re so dead. You must be so low.”

The cave’s hollow stretches to its end, because they meet a wall of gravel and Dream turns to meet the blade of butterscotch tilting his chin upwards in the most sickeningly sugary way George can manage.

“Any last words?” he says.

How dramatic.

“I didn’t forget our anniversary,” practically begs Dream, “I promise.”

George giggles, though this time it is as soft as cotton candy, “Was that your surprise?”

“What? No.”

“Why’d you tell me so early, then?”

Dream tilts his head just a little away from the sword’s bite, “Just to scare you.”

“You’re such an idiot,” George leans in closer.

“Not if it worked.”

“It didn’t.”

“Yes, it did.”

“What is it, then?”

“Sushi restaurant. Five-star.”

Though it is with a shit-eating expression, George’s face lights up, “I’m impressed.”

“Oh, come on. I said one day we could go together, didn’t I?”

“Perhaps.”

The sounds of the cave are silent now. No trickle of water, and the bats have lost their will to squeak in respect to let them have their moment. Minecarts have ceased their creaking. The rattle of bones and the groaning of rotten flesh are now truly dead.

George’s grip on his blade is now slack, and Dream waves it away to reach to touch their foreheads, tipping George’s face just a little bit, but in just the right way. His expression is less harsh now, washed over with a mild contentedness as Dream hushes his soft giggle with a kiss that he so sweetly melts in.

That is, until the canine of a stone sword pierces through George’s chest with the intent to be malicious and benevolent at the same time.

“Wh—Dream! What!?”

His only response is the sharp flow of the tang of iron down his abdomen, and the eventual dizziness of collapsing to meet the annoying tickle of nylum gnawing at the back of his neck when he respawns.

Along with the deafening howl of Dream’s laughs.

“Dream—what was that?”

“I killed you, is what it was.”

“That is so—no, I want a rematch. That wasn’t fair.”

“‘*Wasn’t fair*,’ you literally did the same thing to me last round.”

“Okay, fine. That was so rude, though.”

“It was karma,” Dream sasses, “I think I deserved to do that.”

“Shut up, whatever. You’re...” George buries his face in his hands, “You are so annoying.”

The sound of crimson plants crunching is indicative that he is not alone anymore, and perhaps will never be, and perhaps that is a fortune and a misfortune at the same time. Dream stands over his body, indignant and loving.

He reaches his hand out, “I booked the restaurant for tomorrow.”

George grabs it, finally admitting defeat.

“It better be good.”

## Chapter End Notes

draem and gogy please use my strats plea—

# Minecraft Manhunt, But We Never Leave the Nether

## Chapter Summary

this week has been Something y'all im sorry if you dont get the references this fic is canon divergence now

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The giant, scarlet fungi chime their melancholy, though it is unsure that its inhabitants do the same. Dream is slightly annoyed by the piglins' lively grunts and snorts, ultimately jealous of the contentment they hold for their home's hierarchy of chrysopoeia. The constant drone of agonized netherrack and nylum creak deaf in his ears, nearly overriding the occasional rumble of a hoglin. As he crunches through, warped fungi find a purpose in his inventory, and the Nether looks down on him for being such a thief. She shouldn't be surprised, honestly—he has always been one, especially to George's heart.

Rot oozes in his mouth as he takes a nibble of its horrid flesh, the putrid smell rising up to his nose enough to make him gag. It has a sharp sourness to it, fresh full of decomposing meat.

His heart confesses that he misses George's steaks, however reluctant it is.

A sharp bite of a golden pickaxe meets gold ore with a loud and breathless shriek. He wonders what it would be like only seeing the spectrum of gold and lapis.

A pair of honey-colored boots resound their harmony as he puts them on. He decides he misses the taste of lemonade and apple juice.

An absentminded and ringed finger feels through his magenta sword. Dark intonations of fuschia wiggle their way into the wood, rich in color and in the way it smells like wine. He really should stop thinking about George.

The echo of a hoglin, or more likely, a couple of them, squeal their wilderness and show off their ivory tusks. Dream, now even more irritated, takes a quick note to run away. Towering up three blocks, he readies his weak blade in hopes for a better meal later.

But speak of the devil, the whimsical movement of his hunter catches his eye, ironically akin to a bunny hopping about. He hops a couple more blocks up.

"Oh, Dream~ there you are," George says, "Did you miss me?"

"No."

"Yes, you do."

Dream ceases the intention to slice through alienated pork, letting them perk their heads towards George in a change of interest. He feels the ground rumble through his makeshift fort as they snarl away from him.

“Oh what—no get away from me,” George says, towering up as well, “Sit. Down.”

“‘Sit down’?” Dream mocks, “You act like they’re dogs, George.”

“Leave me alone, Dream.”

“You’re the one hunting me.”

“Okay—stop bullying me.”

Dream chuckles, “I’m not bullying you.”

“You don’t get to decide that.”

“Yes, I do.”

“No, you’re—,” a dreadful gasp, “Oh my *God* .”

Their bickering, or rather, George’s, is cut short by the hiss of an arrow that digs through his cheek, and even Dream grimaces as the tang of iron hits his nose. Regardless, he continues wearing a sadistic grin as their game turns into that of an obnoxious king entertained by a poor, sorry peasant running around in an arena.

“Where are your socks, George?” Dream teases.

“Oh my God—shut up,” George muffles through a pierced jaw, now mauled by a mob of both types of pigs, “Why are there so many!?”

Dream notes that the death message in the chat is indicative of his survival, standing on his tower of fake triumph.

“You didn’t have socks on—that’s why they killed you,” Dream singsongs.

“‘S too hot for socks,” George mutters.

“That’s your loss.”

An annoying amount of swings of Dream’s sword gives him raw pork and enough leather for a cap, but nothing to dye it with and no piglins to sing their eulogies. He suffices with a regular leather cap for now, and carries on through the rotten cherry wasteland in search of a good deal.

“I can’t believe I died to that,” George says, probably letting the shock soak in.

“I do.”

George sighs, “That is so annoying.”

“For *you* it is.”

“Well, obviously.”

A conscientious gurgle from a nearby piglin and their child alerts Dream to a potential trade. He sets down his crafting table and lays out his gold to make into ingots—five of them in total. Aggravatingly, bundles of magma creams, pieces of nether brick, and fire charges are all he receives. Reluctantly throwing away the urge to knock the piglin’s teeth in, Dream takes his crafting bench back and the exit of the crimson forest follows suit into bare netherrack.



Spots of more amber poke their gilded claws out of the Nether's flesh, and the clank of his golden pickaxe breaking pulls him out of his mundane trance of mining before he pulls out another one.

A pity that they break so quickly, but their mining speed has to be compensated somehow, or at least that is what people suppose.

The pearly whites of quartz clench their teeth through the waste's skin, begging to be taken, but they know full well they are not of use in their game of cat and mouse, and they probably never will be. The scarlet sinews feel over their delicate enamels, tempting Dream to their lustrous shine, but every speedrunner knows to resist if they are to succeed.

He finishes off the last of the pit of auric metal and treks further into the molten body whose rotten undead wander idle in their aftermath of rubedo. They do not bother to ask him questions, and he reciprocates with the same demeanor. It would be terrible to bring himself attention to a whole crowd of sickly pigs, especially when their hive mind swords threaten his flesh with just bare glints.

"Ugh, you took all the gold— why did you have to do that?" George says.

Dream giggles dumbly, "I need it, idiot."

"Well, leave some for me. I'm trying to kill you."

"Look somewhere else, then."

"I'm trying to deal with these... idiots."

"You mean yourself?"

"Okay, Dream, shut up."

More stupid giggles. Streams of lava splay their fingers around him upon further exploring, hungry for a taste of human to add to its collection of graves. Another sour bite of worm-ridden meat is enough to make Dream's own tongue grow mold, sending his stomach growling, but his skin faintly crawling itself over open wounds.

The rumble of piglins direct him upwards and walls of netherrack slowly stretch above him. His lungs strangely find relief in the way the air is full. He checks his y-level.

*Eighty-five? That's pretty high...*

No wonder he could breathe easier— the buzzing of the Nether's sea of heat is gone, or at least lessened. He crafts his chunks of ingots, throwing them on the ground after he's determined no rebellious children will steal them. The adults grunt, interested with his trade. They tinker their sharp claws into soft metal to assess its value.

A patch of soulsand blocks cough on the ground after one of them picks up a new ingot, and Dream scrapes every last bit, taking spare crimson stems and a few sticks to make a campfire. Raw pork shimmers on the blue flame, and the piglins veer away for its strange hue. It must be something he can't see, but he pays no mind, waiting out their inspection as he shoves the gold further to them with his foot.

The azure fire crackles with a sadness to it, likely from the soulsand's soft singing. Grabbing a block of netherrack beside him, he places it over the campfire so as not to give George a hint of his whereabouts with its smoke, though it is not that it'll matter so much in such a closed off area

anyways. The smell of the meat rendering its fat wisps sweetly to his senses and he presses down the urge to salivate. Once one of them pops out of its designated spot in the heat, he swipes it up to put a new, raw pork chop to cook. The flesh is soft and satisfying to the bite, but once he swallows it, his heart confesses a feeling of loneliness.

He blames the soul fire.

To his side, a mass of strings sit readily at his feet, along with the dying breaths of more soulsand. It's a little too late for the dying breaths of more soulsand. He scours a little more and the path of gravel and crying obsidian's tears proves disappointing to his eyes. Sighing, the strings weave themselves into a bow and a few beds, but no dye to color them with and no hope of rest.

After a desolate session of wandering, he concludes the path is futile. Scraps of quartz chatter their laughter at his demise, and he ultimately decides to tear a stairway down. The veins of netherrack caves let him flow through, its melancholy mahogany creaking eerie in his ears, along with the faint bubble of lava pockets resting softly in its walls. Listening closely, Dream is especially careful not to encounter them.

The floor soon opens up to an ocean of magma so below and unforgiving. Carmine rocks tumble beneath his feet, bouncing off a cliff to the side and into the molten body's acidic heat.

Nothing of much use here. With a tired scrape of his pickaxe, he turns away to find another place to stairway down.

Only to meet the sickening tip of a rosy sword slice the thick air and bite through his cheek

"Hi, Dream~" an equally sickening smile, "Are you hungry?"

Dream staggers back, holding his face as the stark maroon trails down his skin.

"No," he replies, gasping, "Agh, that hurt."

George raises his blade again, "Sorry."

"You're not sorry," Dream takes a swipe with his own, solely to miss.

George lands a hit across his neck, "You're probably right."

Dream turns back around to scramble through the tunnel of netherrack he's made, hearing the greedy gulp of what is probably a fire resistance potion behind him.

*You gotta be joking.*

Pulling out a bed to his hotbar, he reaches the opening so below and leaps toward the cliff. The unbearable heat caresses his skin with its wiggling fingers. Twinkles of glowstone freckle hot in his face. The lava below him is blinding. He might just die.

"Where are you going, Dream?" George cackles with a voice full of cyanide, "You're so dead. There's no way you're surviving this—do you even have fire res?"

He turns his trajectory ever so slightly to place the bed against the wall just below his feet, careful not to trigger it a second time, and the grimacing crackle of joints at his ankles alerts him to the three hearts he barely has. His pickaxe grips desperate at the cliff's face, blitzing through the fragile, vermillion stone to make another tunnel.

“What!?!? You’re actually insane—what even is that? An MLG... *bed clutch* ?,” George says, “Oh, wait, I can just do this—”

And before George leaps to set off the bed’s sleeping mechanic, Dream is quick to place another block between them. In a fantastic explosion, the rumble of netherrack roars a deafening crater around him, fires chattering their shock at his feet.

However, no death message relieves him fully. Instead, George’s sickly silhouette floats battered in the simmering lake, crunching hungry on a pack of rotten flesh.

“How did you survive that!?” George exclaims, “You’re literally insane.”

“How did *you* ? You’re the one who set the bed off.”

“Magic, I guess. I’ll never tell,” George continues sloshing through the lava, “I don’t even know.”

“Of course, you don’t.”

“You’re such an idiot.”

“*I’m* the idiot? That was the biggest brain move—that’s going in a one *thousand* IQ compilation.”

“Yeah, sure.”

“You know it is. Don’t deny it.”

“Whatever,” George rolls his eyes, “Ugh, it’s gonna take me so long to get out of here. What is wrong with you?”

““What is *wrong* with me?”” Dream parrots, “I’m a genius, George.”

“Just get away from me.”

Dream flashes him an arrogant smile before turning back. The lava will keep him most definitely busy, especially stranded out in the open sea.

He gains ground, quite literally chipping forward, and chews on his refuge of foreign pork—the melt of tender fat keeps him sane. It is the least he can do to commemorate George’s steaks.

When he breaks through to the open, turquoise sprouts turn their attention to his presence, and he would reciprocate if not for the endermen guarding them. His eyes are careful not to look up, for theirs pierce throughout the warped silence.

No songs so below or of rubedo or in chrysopoeia—just empty cries and distant shrieks. It is meant to be like this.

Through the indigo fog and specks of dark blue that freckle cold in his face, the contrast of burgundy bricks finally give him mercy. Dream is eager to make his way to them, collapsing tall vines along the way, and scales up to break an opening to the fortress’s tunnel. Its walls sear his palms as he jumps through, but not enough to bring down any hearts.

“You’ve got to be joking,” George complains, “You found a fortress already? I’m still in the lake.”

“You’re lying—you didn’t fall *that* far from the ledge.”

“I’m going to be burning for so long.”

Dream chuckles, “Good.”

“It’s not funny,” George is probably pouting.

“Yes, it is.”

The fortress echoes its sins and rustle their umber bones, welcoming Dream to do the same. He tries to ignore their emotional attachment to him—they haven’t gotten a visitor in a long, long time. His body clambers with full gold and it shimmers with a glow that is alien to him—something that he should get used to in his temporary foster home of eternal summertime sorrows.

A distant call of a sorry Blaze alerts him to around a maze of fences. It is a stray, and it is not merciful. After an acidic burn on his arms, he receives nothing. The tunnel presents him with stairs, but not the kind indicative of a lava well and a spawner on the other side, but he decides to travel upwards nonetheless. It opens up to an open stretch of bridges, lacing over cyan fog and lonely sand, along with the unhappy purrs of the occasional ghast. The familiar pattern of fences catches his eye and out of the air wisps its fiery citizens.

An open spawner isn’t the best, but what choice does he have?

Dream sprints over, readying his sword, and four breaths deafen his ears just as on edge as he is.

“I haven’t seen you in so long, Dream,” George mumbles.

Dream rolls his eyes, “It hasn’t been that long.”

A bruised lip and two rods.

“Yes, it has. Say you miss me.”

“What—no.”

A crooked tooth and one rod.

“C’mon, you just don’t want to because it’s true.”

“I know you’re just jealous, George.”

“Wh—jealous?”

A burnt eye, the texture of decomposing meat, and three rods. Dream smirks through his decrease in hearts and green hunger bars.

“You are *so* jealous,” Dream says.

“Of who??” George sasses.

“Wilbur.”

“No, I’m not.”

“Even when we had it all planned out.”

Simmering burns on his neck and four rods. More than enough.

“I’m filing for a divorce.”

“See? You couldn’t even deny it that time.”

George does not respond, and Dream determines his triumph in their conversation. He crackles through the burgundy bricks once again, receiving the unwelcome bite of the habitual rustle of malicious bones. Fending himself off, he breathes heavily at his darkened hearts and picks up their remains of stone swords. It is a good upgrade from his fuschia one.

He continues down the stairs, the fortress gurgling its cracks as he bounds forward. Using his bundle of vines to soften his fall, he is back at the warped forest and the first enderman he sees drops a pearl, albeit with the sharp tang of red iron flooding his mouth. It is a reasonable trade-off, he supposes.

Sapphire nylium writhe their coldness—a contrast to their eternally heated home as Dream crushes up a Blaze rod into its dusty form. It gleams, stuck between the cracks in his skin, but soon disappears as specks gravitate towards the pearl. Fusing, the eye blinks up at him, a little irritated at the dry heat, with a lonely pupil looking home. Its shimmers turn from a fiery orange to a deep magenta as he lets it float up to his left—back up to the soulsand valley.

A bothersome biome, but it’ll be his only source of arrows, so he lets it slide.

The fortress’s arms welcome him back, surprised at his return, but they both know full well it will not be for long. The stairs send him upwards, a red carpet to the rattle of bones and breathing sand glazed with a whispering cyan wind. He tries not to pay any mind to the distant hisses and empty moans, but the habitual song of fossils always tend to make him face the possibility of mortality.

Chestnut sand grips desperately at his feet, longing to join him to relieve their burdens on the ground, or perhaps waiting for more bones to sort. Annoyed, Dream takes his stack of netherrack to hop along their eulogies, though he is scraped by an arrow at the skeleton’s alert. A few more of them stick to his flesh—a shame that he cannot pull them out—and he receives his own to use.

Several skeletons fall to his sword, and so do several of his own hearts, but the taste of alien porkchop satisfies them just as quickly.

A bite of another sharp sting latches onto his back more sharply than he prefers, which is not to bite at all. Turning around, he is not met with the cold expression of white face, but the sickly grin of a living one.

“I know you’re hungry, Dream,” George says lovingly.

Dream narrowly dodges the teal sword coming for his neck, and pulls out his own ashen blade.

“What—where’d you get stone?” George comments, “You didn’t even get the achievement.”

“Nowhere,” Dream hits the next swipe, “C’mere, George!”

George hisses as he staggers back, clutching the bloody smile on his cheek lined with the dust of wither skeletons. As he looks up, the hard stone makes his way through his stomach and he gags at the smell of red iron and acid and his own pain before it leaves for another taste.

“Oh my God—Dream, we can talk about this,” George turns against the shocked soil, “C’mon leave me alone, Dream.”

It is Dream’s turn to flash a sickly grin, “I thought you missed me.”

George staggers nervously away, crunching on crisp pork chops, “I do. I just don’t like when

you're killing me."

"I don't either, George."

And so does their traditional game of cat and mouse resume, roles reversed as the way it usually goes.

"Dream, please," George giggles, disheartened, "I'll take you to Pizza Hut—I promise."

"A little too late for that."

The lullaby of a ghaſt purrs its fireball.

"You say that like we can't go again—I'll pay."

"Liar."

The curious arrow of a skeleton whizzes by.

"Dream, seriously."

"You're ſuch an idiot."

"I will pay, Dream."

"You are ſuch a bad liar."

The cobalt of the flames crackle their delight.

"I'm not lying this time, Dream."

Dream huffs, "Yeah, 'this time.' You're gonna scam your way out of it ſomehow."

"Well, it only works because you actually go along with it. You're a ſimp."

"Shut up."

The whispers of the ſand's ſkin pull at their feet, and George laughs, "No."

His reſponse is a ſtone ſword ſcraping its tip on his back.

"Okay, okay!" George gasps, "I'll ſhut up—I'll ſhut up! Juſt leave me alone, Dream."

"No way. C'mere, George!"

Dream takes what he thinks is a final ſtab, but watches as George's body diſappears with faint, violet particles laughing at his failure.

"What!?" he exclaims, whipping his head around, "Where'd you go? Did you have a pearl?"

"Uhhh, no. I died."

"You're a terrible liar," Dream ſays, "You would've ſcreamed."

"Well, maybe I've ſtopped ſcreaming."

Dream laughs, "You're *ſuch* a terrible liar."

He spots George sitting atop a ledge far above, his sickly silhouette against the fog, rugged and eating his bruises away. Dream grunts his irritation, and turns away to eat his own wounds away as well before pulling out a bow.

“What, no—put that thing down, Dream.”

Dream grins with the release of an arrow, “Are you hungry, George?”

“Oh my God, you’re literally so annoying,” George says, “That was *my* line.”

“Mine, now.”

Dream decides to conserve his arrows, pulling his sword back out in place of his bow, and the soil drags him along to continue his journey to the stronghold.

“What? You’re leaving me already?” George jokes.

“Wh—you’re so... You *pearled* away from me.”

“I’m trying not to die, Dream.”

“So am I.”

He hears the shuffle of George leaping down, softening his fall with a rustle of twisting vines. Pivoting around, Dream points his ashen blade to George’s teal one once again. Their arena sands desolate, howling its sorry breezes for a grand party of a fight. Surprisingly, George is first to attempt striking, albeit with a silly demeanor to his charge. Their weapons ring around harmoniously with the ghaſt’s lullaby and the beat of bones like child’s play.

“C’mon, Dream—just lemme win.”

“What—no way.”

“Aw, please?”

“Shut up, George.”

“Rude.”

George grimaces at what is likely the last smile to be carved into his flesh, pivoting away in hopes the valley will give him mercy.

“Dream, please. Lemme away.”

“I already let you run away once—now you’re back again.”

“I’m so loyal, aren’t I?”

The ground ripples beneath their feet, hissing and crunching as they pass by.

“Come here, Georgie!”

“No, it’s okay—you can hang out with Wilbur.”

Dream gains ground, a sickening grin is sliced into his face as he swings his sword back for another stab.

That *is* , if he hasn't felt the soft white of wool swallow his boots already.

“Wait, what—”

And brilliant is George's guffaw as the blue fire cackles and the sparks fly around them shortly before Dream's back hits heavy on cold netherrack. Both of them have died.

“WHAT!? WHAAAT?!”

His only response is the saccharine smile from George. He sits up with no bruises or cuts or burns and his body is content, though his mind is not.

“I totally *destroyed* you,” George continues to laugh, “How do you like me now?”

“You're paying for Pizza Hut.”

“This is what you get for cheating on me,” George's giggles soften sweetly, still holding a hint of arrogance.

Dream rolls his eyes, “It was *not* cheating.”

“You still died,” George responds, “Because *I* have the one thousand IQ, now.”

“Ugh, you're so annoying.”

“You love me.”

Dream stretches, smiling at the shine of the gold around his ring finger.

“No, I don't.”

## Chapter End Notes

GEORGE SAID WE'D HAVE A NETHER MANHUNT A WEEK AGO WHERE IS IT SIIIII



## Minecraft Manhunt, But We Never Leave The Nether (Again)

Iridescent and sharp vines scale through George's limbs as they let him travel down from the Nether's ceiling. He reaches the floor and shakes off the residual leaves and rubs his scratches. They are not as bad as sweetberries' thorns, but they irritate him nonetheless.

The warped forest crickets its silence with little nylum sprouts nibbling faintly on his honey-colored boots hoping for a taste that is just as sweet. However, he would protest, along with likely everyone else who knows him, that he is not very sweet.

Is he?

Regardless, they gnaw on. Dark sparks fly cold in his face. Croaks of static and chimes gurgle their distress. Bright blue veins circle around the giant fungi's trunks around him. The distant cry of an enderman resounds through the disorganized jail of stems and George whips his head around to greet nothing but the tight grip on his heart from just the sheer fear of it.

"Oh, George..."

But it is not nearly as frightening as Dream.

"What, Dream?"

The malicious movement of his rival and friend and lover darts where his eye can only barely see. George is quick to grab his itemized logs and flee, though that is until a sharp punch meets his cheek and his head jerks away from the impact.

"Agh, you scared me—" George mutters, staggering back.

Dream smiles, "You're so dead."

Upon recovery, George throws his foot right back at Dream's stomach, and the latter recoils with a sickening smile. Not a hesitation to his pivot slows George down as he turns to speed away and spot the sleek legs of an enderman idly picking at a sprout of fungus in his hands.

"George~ you're not getting away."

Alas, they dance around the man and Dream makes just the wrong punch with its jaw unhinging to show a grotesque collection of purple saliva and ghostly teeth.

"Yes, I am," George smugly replies.

"Wait, what—oh nonono—"

And four hits is all it takes for Dream's body to tint red and pop away. George giggles to the enderman in appreciation—it is but telepathy from a tall, dark, and handsome man to a British bastard. Careful not to smile at it too much, he takes his leave for more wood.

"You're so bad, Dream."

Ten stems should be plenty.

"You're worse."

Taken aback by the retort, George scoffs as his feet trample through nylium. The forest resumes its creaking and the lava continues to cough on its bubbles. A distant shriek makes him shift his eyes. His path is only lit by the shroomlights that pulse their agony and the wail from a creature unidentifiable. All he knows is the hum that drones in a supposed slumber, but he can't tell where it's from either—warped forests are just like that.

Carrying on through the fog of indigo, he stops to craft a sword of teal wood and a pickaxe that is similarly colored. He bounds through the dense collection of vines, remembering to pick some for himself, as well as some warped fungi. Sapphire nylium ceases to its more familiar friend of scarlet and the pearly gates of nether quartz's teeth. A shore of lava opens up with gravel and a broken door of obsidian that is symbolic of a home and a prison. The people around him are nothing but dead, and so he scrambles towards its chest to find a bundle of golden carrots and golden leggings encased in a strange glow.

It reads "Protection IV" and George smiles.

He continues his wandering through the waste's repulsive rot as the grumble of undead piglins pass him by and the smell of decay is so harsh that it bites his skin sour. A tiring period of exploring ensues, much to his chagrin, but it only means more chances of spotting the satisfying glow of gold in the Nether's corners. A pickaxe comes in handy as it tears through scarlet blocks in favor of its hidden auric metal. This proceeds until he has thirty ingots' worth.

The floor becomes a brighter and bloodier scarlet as living piglins roam, dancing across the nylium hills and hoglins follow suit with their joyful funerals. George finds that he is jealous of their celebration rather than uplifted by it.

Cerise trees stretch their leaves above him, or whatever they are. He spares a couple ingots for them to judge, and what he receives is a bundle of string and stretches of leather and chunks of quartz and magma cream. Deciding to take the string, he tosses everything else out and picks up a warped fungus to ward off any hoglins.

The carmine haze eventually dies down its intensity to reveal the unforgiving pillars of brick sinking deep into a lava lake below and he resists the urge to say "pog" out loud. Making a few more pickaxes, he gathers a stack or so of blocks before bridging over. The sea of bright calls to him popping with sparks of curiosity and he is lucky that it only barely scrapes his ankles. His feet leave the netherbrick's squelch soon enough and he starts scaling the satisfying crunch of netherbrick even though the slow mining pace laughs at his predicament.

He shuffles through his inventory to craft himself a full set of gold and the clink of it being put on, rather than the much more preferred clank of iron, is something he'll have to get used to. Regardless, the clack of brick clicking its tongue reverberates through the open hallway.

"Ugh, no... you found the fortress," Dream says, "Usually *I* find it first."

"Okay, shut up, Dream."

Then, suddenly, "FDKJAFSKJSJLA—Oh my God!"

George giggles in surprise, "What? What was that?"

"I almost fell—I almost fell!"

"How did you do that with your mouth?"

Dream feigns a gasp, "Woah, you're asking me what my mouth does? *Inappropriate*, George."

"Wh—okay, whatever. If you died, that would've been great."

"Rude."

The shifting of repulsive bones alerts George to the handsome skeletons sprinting towards him and he is quick to block off their path. Letting his weak sword sweep under them, they soon fall and give him stone swords and bones at their graves. He hops along over the blockage to meet an intersection of stairs and netherwart. On the opposite side is a chest with gold and the whisper of a man encased in his own ring of fire.

In other words, a Blaze, but far away from home.

A burn on his shoulder and a bruised cheek later, his punishment for a fight is nothing. He reaches a turn with another chest and the treasure gapes open with a saddle and the forgiving pieces of three iron ingots. Setting down a crafting table, he attaches string to sticks and fungus to a fishing rod. A shield and an iron sword are brilliant lovers.

The echoes of the tunnel guide him through intersections and windows of fences, but eventually the heavy breaths of the folly of man lying lonely in his own smoke indicate his direction.

In other words, Blazes grieving at home.

George pulls out his sword and its metallic shriek gives him satisfaction. The grand stairs up to the spawner sends its condolences as four men spawn and his shield bears the bite of their flames. He dashes up to swing his blade down a couple to receive a rod and a jaw of fire sinking into his arm.

"Oooh," he hears Dream say.

"What?" George replies.

"This idiot just gave me something."

George smiles and teases, "Don't you mean 'idiot'?"

"Shut up."

George giggles.

"Cheater," Dream suddenly says.

"Wh— so *now* you want to talk about cheating," George sputters and rolls his eyes, "You're *fine*, Dream."

"I *know* , right? I'm so handsome. You miss me so much, George."

"I—okay, I didn't mean it like that."

"Mhmm," Dream hums sarcastically, "*Sure*."

"Ugh, whatever."

George finishes off the last of the Blazes he needs. Nine rods should be plenty. He spins one absentmindedly in his fingers.

It is a shame that it doesn't count as an efficient melee weapon.

"Oh, George~ I have a surprise for you."

"I know," George says sarcastically, "You're always full of surprises."

Then, [*A Terrible Fortress*] leads the achievement logs.

George stares at it, "Oh, you're joking."

Dream lets out an arrogant chuckle and another delighted gasp. Soon enough, George is struck by the fact that Dream has gotten diamonds and he is not willing to find out the limits of his hunter's deceit.

"How!? Oh my God—you're literally so lucky. You're literally so lucky!"

"No, I'm not. You just didn't check all the chests."

George's eyes flit to the nametag rounding the corner and his feet snap away on the crunch of netherbrick.

"Georgie-poo, c'mere! I'm gonna get you!"

"Dream, leave me alone. I'm begging you."

Dream giggles— perhaps pitying him, and perhaps George is okay with that—and mocks, "You're *fine*."

Behind him, his friend's familiar and sickly silhouette encased in gold chases with a turquoise sword eager to taste his flesh. Their game of cat and mouse take on a more traditional tone and George does not appreciate it. Dream's blade meets the cold wood of George's shield, his grip so tight on it, it might keep him sane. Gritting his teeth, George forces the sword away and swipes out with his own.

"Agh," Dream says, "That wasn't very nice."

Dream then flits around him, overwhelming George with his agility.

"C'mon, Georgie, what're you gonna do~?" He laughs.

A few critical cuts until George dashes it and wonders how he hasn't downed all his golden carrots yet. Hissing, the fortress's veins bring them back and forth and up and down and hot and cold and the smell of red iron bleeds tangy in his nose. Bricks now howl at him to outpace his pursuiter and chunks of glowstone shine their sympathy as he runs for his life. Soon, the tunnel ends, preferring to open up to stretches of bridge. Striders warble their peacefulness below.

George does not have the time to envy their peacefulness below, does he?

Leaping a corner, he pulls out a saddle and watches as, unlike water, the sea of lava does not reflect to relieve him of the knowledge of fate. A dramatic increase in vertigo is indicative of his plummet down, nonetheless, and the surprised squeak of a potential friend satisfies his few hearts. He pulls out his fishing rod to lead himself away, looking back to see Dream diving down with a strange, orange aura. Shaking the fishing rod, George narrowly escapes the splash of lava and the scrape of a diamond sword at his companion's feet as they spuddle through the hot body.

"Ugh—no!" Dream says, "Oh, you're so lucky."

"Lucky?? Says the one who MLGed on a horse."

"...whatever."

"Yeah, that's what I thought."

George steadies his steed away from what is most similar to a human crocodile struggling in the sludge of magma. Smiling, he rides away, patting the strider gently. An irritated grunt from Dream mellows his tension and so does the stall of their mortal chase.

The strider crickets a comforting lullaby on their desolate journey, its hairs brushing faintly on George's arms as a sign of grief, though he does not know what he is supposed to be mourning. Maybe it is the nature of their game. George assumes that it must think it odd—there would be no other way to describe it.

A rival and a friend and a lover is a strange way to bond, though perhaps the Narrator gives too much credit to "rival" in difference of their skill. For now, though, their games are even because He says so.

The Nether drools her magma and George pays no mind as the red fog becomes blue and the whisper of souls brush unsettlingly on his skin. He tries his best to ignore their cries as he rests Robert on the shore of gravel and the stable crunch reminds him of the Overworld he knows he won't reach today—if days existed in the Nether, anyway.

His strider chirps its goodbyes as the sand sinks hungrily into George's feet instead of the other way around. Blue fire chatters their crackling as he passes by and the breeze kisses longingly onto his cheeks. A voice sings through the valley and it is neither Dream nor George's, but the ambiance of sulfur in their clandestine gossip. Occasional gapes of the ribs of bone blocks alert him to the mortality of his own and the echoes of life that were once present.

Despite this, he continues through the bitter biome, slaying any skeletons he sees and receiving arrows in the flesh as a gift back along with a bow that breathes its last functions. A Ghast narrowly misses him with a fireball and it hisses as George shoots it back.

"Wow, 'Take Aim?' I'm so impressed, George," says Dream.

George giggleles, "You're so annoying."

"You love it."

"That's very youtuber of you."

"Youtuber of *me*? It's youtuber of *you*."

"Wh—you literally have more subscribers. Besides, *I* am a partnered twitch streamer."

"And what does that mean?"

George doesn't respond, finding that the gold carrots in his hands have disappeared and all that is left are the glimmers dazzling on his skin. Good for a photoshoot maybe, but not when you're running for your life.

Deciding he'll have to deal with the threat of starvation, he continues with the sink of saturation and comes across a fairly high overhang. With an idea, he plants a blue vine down for the soil to hold tenderly as he sorts the bones in his inventory to make bone meal. The vines sparkle green as it springs upwards, wrapping its hungry stems on the platform above.

Now, instead of climbing it, he digs a hole for himself into the ground. The desert of faces breathe their curiosities and some of their souls escape, sparking blue right under his nose to tell him he might die today.

What a way to ruin a party.

He absentmindedly runs a finger over the stick of an arrow, brushing its feather clean. Their game turns into that of patience—something good for a mouse to have.

"Oh, what's this?" He hears Dream mumble.

A slight shift of the expressions patterned on the graves around him show the presence of his friend and rival and lover wolfing through the valley. The familiar name tag proves repulsive to him and he watches it travel closer and up above.

Dream speaks louder and more arrogantly, "You made a ladder for me—that was very nice of you."

"Ugh, I ran out of blocks," George lies.

"There's blocks everywhere, George, we're in a Minecraft world."

"It's soulsand."

"Soul soil's here, too, idiot."

"So are bone blocks."

"Eh, that's fair."

He digs out of his confinement of the dead and, readying his sword, he smiles as it makes a loving slice through the weak pillar of vines. Looking up, its twists shatter, raining down for the audience of faces on the sand to cheer for and revealing Dream's body who now loses its grip on gravity.

"Wh—wait what?!" A gasp, "Oh no—!"

And saccharine is the blood that hugs George's blade and so is the endearing "oh, you're so annoying" that comes after. He watches as Dream's body pixelates away, leaving his items on the ground. Unlike lava, the reflection of the lonely diamond sword shows George his fate.

"Yess!!! Ahaha! Dream, you're actually so bad—did you know that?"

"Oh my God... it was a trap?"

George hums sweetly, "Obviously."

He admires the turquoise, running an absentminded hand up the glossy sheen and playfully testing its sharpness with the pad of his finger. A spot of red spreads through the pattern of prints and he smears it on the idealized carbon.

A nice decoration.

Dragging away, the cyan fog mellows to a saturated vermilion and pink specks brush hot on his skin. Wandering piglins grumble their indifference to him.

So much for a society.

Hoglin's, in contrast, snort in hostility and George builds up three blocks, careful not to misplace one.

We all know how that would go.

Raw pork is soon charred nicely on a temporary sanctuary of blue fire and the surrounding piglins hush away at its presence. With the additional relief of Dream's own supply of food, he feasts on the desperate makings of decomposing flesh and what he hopes to be bacon. Nuggets of gold lie waiting to be picked all around him, shining their glossy honey against the unforgiving heat. George isn't sure if he's gotten used to it.

Nevertheless, his multiple wooden pickaxes make up for the trouble and the trades go decent even though the piglins hold him a grudge for stealing their no man's treasure. Eleven ender pearls isn't necessarily plenty, but there is plenty of space for a gamble.

George really isn't one to gamble, but what can he do?

Crushing up a Blaze rod, its powder fuses into the pearl and finally does the eye blink up at him in search of home. Its pupil contracts, recognizing that it is met with red fog instead of the brightness of a blue sky. Regardless, it knows where to go, and George tosses it up to let its purple tail of powder follow behind it.

Left.

Deciding to make himself a golden pickaxe, he proceeds over a ravine as nether quartz bares its teeth in laughter and the cherry wasteland disappears into the aftermath of rubedo once again.

Then, a low giggle caresses his ear so endearingly, "George...."

He whips his head around, holding his breath. Nothing.

"You're such an idiot. You're nowhere near me."

"Alright. But I made you look around, didn't I?"

"No—there's no way. You're literally a lava lake away from me."

"I mean... you're not *terribly* far."

"You... literally are."

Dream hums in delight, "We'll see."

George rolls his eyes and continues through the scarlet apocalypse. The lonely sounds of lava bubbling in his company greets him again. He scans around and drops down to a shore, the chatter of gravel and magma blocks familiar to him. A sharp corner peeks out from a cliff, unnatural in the way it should be handmade. With a shred of hope, George scrambles to it with a pickaxe that is just as almost as dead. Mining through the blackstone, he falls through to an archway and meets the process of rooms.

"What—how did you find it already? That was so... quick," he hears Dream sass.

George giggles, probably regretting it, "You better hurry up, Dream~"

He opens a warped door and slides his hands gingerly on the pretty patterns before letting it close. It is strange not hearing the sharp sound of iron. It is also strange not hearing the layout of

silverfish squirming in their stones. He cannot rely on the portal room's mote of lava to tell his way anymore, for it is everywhere. Proceeding, eventually does find the portal room, albeit with a burn on his foot and a single eye snuggled in its socket.

Just enough.

He hops on the frame and blocks off the silverfish spawner, and just to be safe, covers up the lava at the bottom, too. Letting the rest of the eyes fulfill their fate, they stare at him with the air imploding to open its mouth of void. It takes its first breath and George steps in.

Immediately is the crackle of basalt irritating to his ears and the unforgiving lava lake below. The achievements [*Hot Tourist Destination*] and [*The End?*] prove to be eyesores. Up above, the ruler gets comfy with her new surroundings, happy to accommodate lava in her ring of obsidian pillars. Magma cubes jump around, happy to accompany her.

"I can't believe you got further than me," mutters Dream.

"I mean, you chased me back last time, so that's your fault."

"I know."

Abandoning the need to banter, George takes his dying bow and runs to miss two arrows before hitting his first crystal. Two more fantastic explosions shatter their cages and the dragon spits venom.

And venomous are the achievements in the chat that follow suit. George looks back to see Dream standing adorably on the square of inky rock with nothing but a gold helmet.

"Wh—how are you here?" George asks.

"You don't need to know."

"You're ridiculous."

Dream chuckles, "You don't need to tell me that."

George smiles, though it doesn't go without a hint of irritation. Four more end crystals burst into a brilliant dust until he feels a sharp pain of a stone sword caress his cheek. Countering, George slashes back with a grimace. The crumble of blackstone and basalt are an orchestra to their irregular dance and magma cubes are not hesitant to join.

"Georgie~ c'mere!"

"Dream, leave me alone—ugh, you know what?" George pauses his stringing his arrows and his diamond blade shines out, "You're so dead."

Their game of cat and mouse reverses, but their demeanors are no different. Violet sparks fly all over the ground, static and deadly. Dream laughs, jumping over an opening in the ground and turns around to push George away.

A gasp, "H—what!? Oh no—"

Except George doesn't fall to his demise. Merely, the fabric of his shirt is held tightly in Dream's fists and George's feet barely catch the edge of the cliff, scuffling desperately to gain reassurance.

Alas, it doesn't do much. He is still bound by Dream's mercy.



"Drea—" a nervous laugh, "Dream. We can talk about this. C'mon, Dream, please don't let me go."

Dream tilts his head, a wicked grin carved on his face reminding George if they were really the right choice of words. A very loud and obvious shuffling of Dream's feet threatens to fall them both as they lean a little further to death.

"Wait, no—not like that."

Dream stops and George is gripping his hand for dear life, as if to say "that's what I thought."

"Dream—please. Let me live."

Then, Dream pulls him up, though not quite enough for George to gain ground for himself.

"So, let's talk about it," he leans in sickeningly close to his ear, "Tell me where you'd want to go for vacation."

George lets out a huff of amusement and aggravation, "What? I don't know... Disney probably?"

But annoyed is the dragon waiting for them to finish their lover's quarrel and in a satisfactory explosion, the two are knocked down off the edge.

"Oh, oops," Dream chuckles guilty, "I didn't mean for that to happen."

"What—oh, you're joking!" George stares up at him as they fall, "Ugh, I hate you."

In a fantastic splash, the lava ripples as they hit the surface. They appear back at the unusually silent warped forest—bare of armor and items.

"Oh my God, noo," George sighs, burying his face into his palms, "I could've won that."

"The dragon would've killed you anyways."

"No she wouldn't have," George rolls his eyes, "Whatever. So, are you taking me to Disney or something."

Dream absentmindedly plays with the ring on his finger, "Someday. For a honeymoon or something."

"Really?"

"What do you mean '*really*'? Of course I am."

George hums, "Hmmm... maybe next time I can kiss you in a Nickelodeon resort."

Dream laughs, "You're an idiot."

## End Notes

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